

Everyone leaves something behind for their children to remember them by. Lily Evans didn't know, when she left her diary behind, that it would help her son into knowing her and himself. ...Or did she?

Disclaimer: I own nothing. Don't bother suing cuz you won't get nuthen out of it neither.

Warning: First attempt at Harry Potter fanfiction. This is mostly an H/Hr romance (gotta love those two) but also contains a LOT of Lily/James and Draco/Ginny. Please be kind. Also, this prologue is a bit drawn out, since I wrote it in a bad mood moment (filled with frustrating interruptions, which, of course, handicapped my train of thought greatly, so this does not reach my usual level of perfection (yeah, right!). Anyway, I tried to fix it as best I can, so I hope it'll go. I'll let you know that for this I'm putting my Anime related fics on the backburner, so I hope you appreciate (they've actually been there for more than a year). Oh, and this was entirely written before OoFP entered my life, so be sure to keep that in mind, because it kind of makes this an AU.

And now, on with the fic.

Harry Potter and the Knowledge of a Mother

By Pearl Drop Angel

Prologue: Dread and Anticipation

Tomorrow, Harry thought. Tomorrow is the beginning of the end of Hogwarts for me. But then again, was it? Hogwarts was so much a part of his life—or better yet, it had been the start of a real life for him—that he knew he could never truly leave it behind. After all, how can one forget the first home ever known? But still, tomorrow was the first day of his last year in that wonderfully magical and heartwarming castle where he'd first known of friendship and rivalry, of love and hate--for anything other than his adoptive family. The place where he'd found out the truth about his lost family, and, all the while, made himself a new one.

He smiled at the thought.

He really had made himself a family there.

Dumbledore and McGonagall to him had become like grandparents—or what he thought grandparents were supposed to feel like. Dumbledore, wise beyond words yet still a child at heart, had given him advice and simple warmth with just a word, a smile, a twinkle from behind his half-moon spectacles. McGonagall, strict and stiff in appearance, had tried to back him up in everything—as much as she could while trying to maintain the objective teacher-student look of things—she'd understood him in almost all his turmoil (especially regarding his parents), and she'd even spoiled him a little. He smiled at the memory of the Nimbus 2000 that Hedwig had brought him the morning of his first Quidditch game.

There were Ron, and Hermione.

Ron was his brother, in everything and every way, except for the blood relation part. They'd shared laughs, fights, opinions, and an unhealthy growing obsession for a particularly dangerous sport played on broomsticks called Quidditch. It had only gotten worse as Ron had made Gryffindor Keeper at the beginning of their fifth year. And—though that would sound like any other best friend to people—they were brothers. For one thing, Harry had felt an instant bond with him from the start, and also for the fact that they were both—for different reasons—jealous of each other. And that's what made them brothers. Friends, after all, weren't real friends if there was something like jealousy amuck. Brothers, instead, couldn't possibly consider each other so without it. He'd come to this realization after several summers spent with the Weasleys.

Maybe it was better this way, for, this year, he couldn't have bared to see the happy family laughing and joking and arguing while among them there would be Hermione Granger.

Hermione. The constant female presence of his life, she'd been there just as long as Ron, and she was the reason for the livid jealousy he felt towards the boy.

Harry James Potter, in fact, had been in love with Hermione Granger, for quite the duration of their nothing-but-friendly relationship, and Hermione, though she'd always demonstrated no romantic interest in anyone attending the Hogwarts grounds, was—as Harry was convinced—madly, head-over-heels in love with the youngest Weasley man.

Of course, neither of them had openly come to tell him such news, but how could he deny it when he'd witnessed himself the way, over the years, they acted differently around each other? The way they were constantly touching, and the fight they'd had in forth year when Ron had asked her to the dance as a last resort, and every fight thereafter, how could he ignore those? Especially since he knew them both so well, and knew that they didn't usually demonstrate open affection.

No, he was glad this year he wouldn't be spending the summer with them. Even if that meant having to suffer the Dursleys, at least he wouldn't be forced to watch their blossoming love. Maybe, if he was lucky, they would come to pick him up—as previously arranged—in the morning to go together to King's Cross and find them disgustingly happy announcing their engagement. Yes, at least that way, his awkwardness would be justified. I just hope they don't ask me to take part of the ceremony.

"POTTER!" The loud booming voice of his uncle Vernon called from downstairs, startling him out of his thoughts and the snow white owl next to him out of sleep. "COME DOWN AND GIVE DUDLEY HIS DINNER! ... NOW!" He bellowed.

Good, Harry thought. I shouldn't be thinking these thoughts about my friends.

And as he stalked to the door he paused.

Oh, things would be so much simpler if they were only friends!

o*o

It was so early in the morning that it still was black and night seemed to be undecided whether or not to stay or move on, and Harry couldn't see the numbers on his wrist watch no matter how long he stared at it. Hermione had written him telling that, since she had family in one of the little towns in Surrey—not too far from where he was—and they had given their home to the Grangers for the summer; Arthur Weasley would get a one day permit to link the borrowed chimney to the "Floo Powder" line so that the Weasleys could apparate in and, with the Grangers, come and get him. Considering how long it would take to get from Little Whinging to King's Cross in a group of eight people they would have to come and pick him up far before the sun would even contemplate rising. Thank God Hermione had suggested she get his school supplies and whatever he would need from Diagon Alley, for the Dursleys would have never permitted him to go.

He sighed heavily. Hermione. Maybe if she wasn't so considerate of him, he wouldn't have such a hard time convincing himself that she could only ever be a...good friend to him. Nothing more, nothing less, at least on her part. Thing was all her kindness towards him kept putting false hope into his mind.

But before he could pursue that thought, a minivan and a station wagon pulled into the Dursleys driveway, and—thanks to the headlights of the cars—he could make out the shape of six very different looking shadows get out of the car and talk amongst themselves for a while. Finally, only three people walked up to the door. He recognized one of the heads as Hermione's—the hair kind of gave her away—so he figured the other two must have been her parents for their shape didn't seem like anything even remotely close to the Weasleys.

Harry, of course, had told his Aunt and Uncle about this, and had also explained that they would be coming with cars in the early morn. At first, he'd thought that uncle Vernon had simply forgotten or not believed him, for, after a certain hour, no sounds had come from the house, and Harry assumed they had fallen asleep. Now he realized that, instead of going to sleep, they had all (Dudley included) stayed up for the length of the night while staring out the window much like he had, for they were making quite a ruckus after the doorbell rang

twice. He heard Dudley (for no other footsteps could be that heavy on the poor abused stairs) run ahead of everyone to get to the door and see his "weird" friends before the rest. Strange considering the last time he met some his tongue had been on the wrong end of a joke.

He shrugged to himself, and, leaving his things in the bedroom as to not upset his uncles, followed them down the stairs in time to see Dudley yank the door open and the three people behind it gasp in surprise (hopefully his "family" would think it was from the sudden move and not from the noticeable size of the human whale that was, in fact, his cousin).

He watched Dudley take in the three with his eyes and his jaw drop.

Ogling git, he thought to himself, knowing quite well what had made his lower mouth fall like that.

"Uhm...hello, you must be Dudley," Hermione's voice called and Harry snickered to himself at the sarcasm barely laced in her voice. "I'm Hermione Granger, and these are my parents. We're here to pick up Harry," she announced.

Silence.

And more silence.

"I did get the right house, right?" She voiced after a second, and Harry this time found it very difficult to keep his chuckling quiet.

More silence ensued.

Sighing, he descended the stairs and made his way to the front door, speaking before he got in sight of the family on the threshold. "Come on in, Hermione, they wo—" his sentence hung in mid air as he finally took in the person standing in the doorway. Wow! Was all he could think as he looked down at her. She'd grown taller, but hadn't managed to come even close to his eye level for he had grown quite a bit as well, however it was not her height that impressed him. There she was, in front of him, freckles more noticeable then usual because of the, rather lovely, bronze colored suntan, hair—though always in a

mass of unruly curls—longer (almost to her waist in layered lengths) and lighter colored, eyelashes long, black and curly framing her warm chocolate eyes and pink full lips slightly parted in surprise. Her lithe figure had filled out in a rather billowy form, elegant, sweet, and sinful. Bodies like that shouldn't be allowed on human beings, especially when clad in only an oversized fleece sweater that did a poor job of hiding it, short jeans mini (God, those legs should be illegal) and white cloth Sneakers.

Of course, he took in all this in the time span of three milliseconds, after which, he gave a loud "Hermione" in precisely the same moment in which she shouted "Harry!" and threw herself in his arms. He caught her, picked her up and spun her around in his arms laughing. Bloody hell! He thought to himself. She's probably never going to touch me like this again, I might as well enjoy it.

"Oh, Harry! I missed you so much!" She shrilled in his arms amongst giggles. "Put me down, let me take a good look at you!" She ordered, completely ignoring her parents approaching the Dursleys after the doorway was freed.

"Argh! Always the bossy bookworm I see," he joked as he released her, stepping back, arms held out at his side to give her a good view of himself. He saw her eyes become saucers and her mouth part in pleasant surprise. She was sure Harry was oblivious of what a male specimen he had become, but she definitely was not. She's been subjected to his charms from the start, but over the years, it had been harder and harder to keep it from showing, and she was afraid that, looking at him now, this year would prove to be too much for her.

For one thing, he towered over her (and she realized, looking at him, that she definitely had an unspoken attraction for tall men...or maybe it was just Harry). He must have reach the two meters, and maybe passed it a little, she guessed, considering that she was around one seventy-eight (which was, for a girl, rather very tall). He was slender and with long arms and legs (not skinny like he'd been). "Looks like you've been eating all the treats we sent for your birthday, huh?" She laughed, but the truth was, that he was beautiful. There was an underlying power in his lanky frame, and, despite the fact that he was wearing some very old looking hand-me-downs (probably from when

Dudley went to grade school) that didn't fit very well at all, his tightly corded layer of Quidditch induced muscles was evident (at least to her) and quite impressive. His shoulders and chest quite broad, his waist tapered, and she was sure that under those huge pants he had what she called "the dimple of power" on the sides of his hips. His legs were strong and tapered, and, in truth, he put to shame the Greek gods represented by the masters of arts. His skin was darker, with a slight stubble growing on it (God, that's sexy!), and his face had become, to put it in one word: chiseled. The baby fat had disappeared and had left behind a strong, determined, squared chin with just the slightest hint of a dimple, sharp cheekbones, and well defined, thick black eyebrows. And his eyes...well, what could she possibly say more about them after all those years of contemplating them? Magnetic emerald depths that would bring her to her downfall if she stared at them too long.

So she looked away.

She was always afraid that looking at his eyes would bring the words that she swore she would never say to him out of her mouth. Instead, she noted, his hair was always the uncontrollable black mass of wavy yet straight strands.

She realized that if she didn't say something soon the silence between them would become uncomfortable, but (Thank God!) Ron and Ginny had come in to save her.

o*o

Strange, Harry thought to himself once the Hogwarts Express started moving. This was his seventh trip to The Castle, and it had never been quite like this. In first, he'd started out on his own, and, basically, everything was so new to him that, outside of meeting Ron and Hermione, he just remembered being completely flabbergasted at how it was all so different. In second and third...well, he'd found other ways of getting to destination because of...complications that he'd come across. The other years, instead, he'd always found himself, for one reason or another, at the Burrow during this particular time of year, so he'd found himself running a race against time with the

Weasleys just to be able to pass the barrier of 9 ¾ on time to catch the annoyingly punctual train.

This time (probably because it had been the Grangers to organize everything), for once, they had gotten to King's Cross in plenty of time, had a lovely breakfast in a small bar outside the station, and had been among the first ones to cross the barrier, barely passed 10:30. They had found a spacious, clean, and well ventilated cabin (the very last one of the train) and had gone on with their usual banter.

"Honestly, Harry! You're cousin's a cow!" Hermione sighed and plopped herself in the comfortable cushioned seat of the cabin. "I mean, you did tell me about him, but...Honestly! I would have never thought!" She exclaimed.

"Actually," Harry began with a hint of a smile at the corner of his lips betraying the serious tone of his voice, "he dropped a whole of three pounds in the last four years. Never mind he picked them all back up yesterday after he found a Snickers bar that had been under the sofa pillows since at least '89, among other things."

Ginny and Hermione were practically rolling on the floor. Well, it had been the truth, but maybe they found it funny exactly because they thought it so.

"Yeah, Fred and George told me about him, but I had no idea he was that big! Maybe we could use him as Keeper, nothing would be able to budge past him...then again, there's no way in bloody hell that a broom could hold him up," Ron started, and continued for a good half hour on Dudley's girth, before deciding that it was time to move onto the other Dursleys. "Oh, and your uncles are lovely, too," he began. "Once they figured the Grangers were Muggles they loved them!"

"No, they loved the fact that they're orthodontists with an important studio in London," Harry corrected. "Uncle Vernon thinks that no matter what business you're in, good connections are always important," he explained.

"Yes, I noticed," Hermione said rolling her eyes. " 'Oh, but won't you have some tea with us? There's plenty of time to get to the station' ",

she gushed, perfectly imitating Petunia Dursleys rather quite annoying falsetto. "Then, of course, they saw the Weasleys and suddenly decided that we were going to be late if we didn't leave that precise second," she pointed out with a sharp look to Harry, and then turned to Ron with knit eyebrows. "What exactly happened with your brothers that year?"

Harry laughed, and Ron smirked. "Bloody hell, I wasn't there, but they told me enough to know that ton-tongue toffees shouldn't have been tested on Muggles," he summed.

"Yeah," Harry agreed. "Dudley was going around on all fours with his tongue flapping all over the place while my aunt was on his back trying to rip said tongue off with her hands, all the while trying to keep Mr. Weasley away even though he was trying to bring his mouth to normal. If I wasn't so scared of Dudley dying while I got the blame for it, I would have found it rather funny," he mused, the corners of his mouth pointing upwards.

"Looks to me like you find it quite amusing," Hermione said, poking him in the ribs.

"Yeah, but what about when Hermione's parents started saying how well they raised Harry?" And, saying this, Ron cleared his throat and spoke as Mr. Granger. "I must say, I only met Harry on few occasions, and the most I know about him is what my daughter told me, but I must also say, that he must have been raised incredibly well, to be able to handle his fame and fighting against the Dark Lord nearly risking his life for the sake of others. I, myself, don't know where my daughter would have been if he hadn't been there to help her" and at that point I was so ready to swear your uncle would have a stroke. He had no idea what the bloody hell Mr. Granger was talking about, but when he heard the word "fame" I thought he forgot to breath. "Well, sir, we never allowed him to lack anything he desired, but we sure had a firm grasp on him while he grew up", Jeez, Harry, if I'd been in your place I would have made him throw up slugs for a week!" Ron finished.

Before Harry could reply though, a group of thirteen girls or so ran up to their cabin, opened the door, all breathless and red faced. One of

them asked aloud for the others; "Uhm...do you know if Harry Potter is on this train?" Four pairs of eyebrows touched four hairlines at the same time. "Because we heard he went to Hogwarts, but we're not sure if it's just a rumor or not," the pretty blond went on. By this time they had all figured out these were first years' and had all turned to look at Harry who shrugged his shoulders. The girls obviously taking this as a no began to turn away.

From the back they could hear one of them say, "I told you it was impossible! Even if he goes to Hogwarts do you really think he would come with the Express, I mean he's like, RICH! Although those two guys in there were pretty hot! Did you see the one with the glasses? If he ever talks to me I'll faint in the halls!"

"Yeah, but I liked the redhead, did you see the biceps he had?" Another girl exclaimed, and in the cabin the boys' faces both turned redder than Weasley hair.

Deciding they were saved from the sea of raging eleven year old with some serious hormonal dysfunction, ("Thank Merlin, we were never that scary at eleven!" Hermione sighed) they relaxed in their seats, had not a familiar and mostly unwelcome voice broken into their cabin.

"Well, well, well, Potter, looks like this year your fan club's getting head starts, we're not even on Hogwarts grounds yet," Draco Malfoy sneered at them. And from somewhere off to the left that couldn't be seen from the seat, came many a high pitched squeals, all saying pretty much thousands of things that could be summed up in one word: "POTTER?!!"

Harry slapped his forehead in his palms, Ron looked ready to draw blood, and Hermione cast a worried glance to Ginny who showed her first sign of life since they had reached King's Cross. She paled (which, in truth, made her look more dead than alive, but, oh, well).

"What do you want Malfoy?" And Ron dragged the name out like it were the most awful word in the magical world, which, to him, it was.

The ferret's eyes flickered towards Ginny, who was trying to make herself as small as possible in her seat, before going back to sneer at

Ron. "Nothing Weasel!" He half shouted at him before leaving like a bat out of hell.

"Weird!" Ron exclaimed while throwing his hands up in the air. Ginny, in the meantime, had gotten up to search in her bag, quickly pulling out a piece of parchment (slight beat up from the ride), and hurrying out after the seething blond (having a hard time, though, for the sea of raging-out-of-control-hormones had come back and was blocking rather magnificently the small entry).

"Draco!" She called out to him, but froze when realizing that she'd just used his given name. He stopped in his track too.

Tu-thump! Was that her heart that she just heard in her ears?

Tu-thump! Yep, it was, and it was getting louder.

Tu-thump! Oh, good Gods, he was turning around so slowly that hell would freeze over before he faced her.

Tu-thump! Oh, man, he's mad! He's mad! He's so mad that he's not even saying a word!

Tu-thump! Would you crack an expression already?!

Tu-thump! Oh, please—

"What did you call me?"

Tu-thump, tu-thump, tu-thump-tu-thump-thump-thump-thump-THUMP!!! Oh, God, her heart had just ceased to exist after that one particularly explosive THUMP!

"Uh...Malfoy!" She finally squeaked out. "I...called you Malfoy...what...else...should I call you?" She tried to cover up with a nervous giggle which sounded far too fake and guilty, even to her own ears.

He grunted. "What do you want?"

"Uhm..." maybe this wasn't such a good idea.... "I...wanted to give you this" she finally said, cursing herself for actually letting herself admit that she was giving him something that her very own hand had penned. As she extended her hand out to him, the parchment she was holding trembled like if it had just been hit with a quivering spell. Sweat was lining her forehead. "I wanted to write to you over the summer, but I thought that if your dad recognized our owls we might never see them again, so I figured it was best to give it to you now," she explained, her hand still extended to him.

He stared at her hand for what seemed like an eternity locked in a second, and finally said, "My parents had...business to take care of. I was alone...all summer long." He replied, his piercing gray eyes still fixed on her hand.

"Oh," she mumbled. "I'm...sorry. I didn't know." He wasn't taking the parchment. Maybe if she slowly drew it back to herself, he wouldn't notice how big of a fool she'd made of herself. Maybe...

"No! I'll take it!" He shouted. Reaching his hand out to take it from her. Trembling more than before she very, very, very slowly began to bring the parchment back to him. And just as slowly, he curled his fingers around it, making sure that there was absolutely no physical contact between the two.

Then silence ensued.

Right as she was contemplating just turning around and going back to the cabin, he spoke again. "It would not have displeased me to receive an owl this summer. Even if from a Weasley," He remembered to add at the end.

Strangely enough, she didn't flinch at the last part of his statement. Instead, she smiled. "Well, the next time you're home alone and bored out of your wits, you might want to owl me, so that I'll know," and this time she did turn around and skipped her way passed the growing sea of raging-out-of-control-hormones. Hermione was right. Thank Merlin they hadn't been that scary when eleven and with a big crush. She deliberately ignored the little voice in the back of her mind telling her that her big eleven-year-old crush had brought her to

confide in an evil diary which had used her to petrify half the Muggle born student body of Hogwarts by freeing a Basilisk. Nope, she had NOT been as scary as them.

Her thoughts were confirmed when she finally squeezed through to see Ron, with his back pressed to the train's window, holding Harry in a Muggle Wrestling style vice while keeping the black hair away from the Lighting Bolt scar; Harry trying to flee for his life; and Hermione trying to get in the way of Colin Creevy's camera, while what seemed like thousands of hands were trying to rip off a piece of the very oversized sweater that Harry HAD been wearing and was now reduced to shreds.

Nope, they had definitely NOT been that scary.

Finally, Hermione had gotten tired and pulled out her wand, pointing it at the herd of girls.

Obviously, the name Hermione Granger had become just as famous as Harry Potter's, for it seemed that the sea had been split as though it were Moses himself holding his shepard's staff.

Some girls seemed ready to face her wand as well, but decided against it.

Definitely, definitely, they had not been this scary, she thought as she watched them walk away, some of them triumphantly holding up a ripped piece of ancient sweater.

o*o

Harry sat with Hermione on his left, and Ginny and Ron across from him at the Gryffindor table. Soon, the first years would walk in to be sorted out. He was enjoying himself, and he would have enjoyed himself more if he didn't have the full knowledge that only two seats away there were Colin and his brother wasting as much Magic Camera Film as they could, and on the other side of the table at much the same distance, Seamus Finnigan and Neville Longbottom were trying out new spells that they learned over the summer. He just hoped they'd leave him with both his eyebrows at the end of dinner.

He watched in silence as the new recruits marched in, nervous and excited (flattening his hair at the sight of several girls he recognized from the mob on the train, who were, to his chagrin, pointing, giggling, and informing everyone they could that the "hot" guy with the round glasses was, in fact, Harry Potter), and followed the Sorting Hat's welcome with little interest. His rhymes really needed a boost.

He noted with a smile that there were quite the number of Gryffindors among the new comers, and his smile would have stayed put if he hadn't heard the name of one particular boy being called out. Kevin Creevy. He visibly shuddered. Could he handle yet another Creevy?

Slowly, fearfully, he looked up at the figure going to sit on the stool, under the hat, and... nearly suffered his first heart attack. The kid looked like a bloody thug wearing a Creevy mask! The face was basically like his brothers', but...the long spiked hair, the incredible number of piercings on his ears and eyebrows, and the black eyeliner (?) definitely didn't put him into his "Creevy" list.

And of course, he had to be sorted into Gryffindor.

Thank God, all the seats next to him were occupied. Oh, no, never mind, the elder Creevy siblings had saved a spot for their family's new addition to their house table. He groaned, and Hermione laughed out right. He glanced over at her and understood that she'd practically read everything that had just gone on in his mind.

He was about to comment, when the creature, that had caused the whole exchange in the first place walked over to stand next to Ron, facing Harry. Several eyebrows shot up at this, wondering just how THIS Creevy was going to react to Harry.

"You Potter?" He asked gruffly.

"Uh...yeah..." he answered uncertainly.

"Heard my bros were pressin' on ya. If you need 'em to stop just gimme a whistle. I'll be your personal Creevy bodyguard." And with that he just walked back to his seat.

Slowly, Harry turned to look at Hermione. "We were definitely NOT that scary," and with that he listened as McGonagall and Dumbledore did their usual speeches.

"For the seventh years," Dumbledore began, and Harry realized that he'd never said this at a sorting ceremony.. "I'm sure you've noticed how every year, the seventh years talk about in secret about a certain project that they do not wish to share with their younger fellow students as to not spoil the surprise for them. Generally, we present you with this project further in the year, but, as you all seem to be more creative with each passing year, this term we'll start earlier. The head of your house will tell you where and at what time to meet. I believe it is something very special that you will all enjoy."

"What could it be?" Hermione asked eager. "I've heard it was something very fun from the seventh year prefects last year."

"I don't know," Harry replied, touching his scar. It was strange. It tingled. Not the burning, or itching, or hurting that he felt whenever Voldemort was up to no good.

It felt like the fuzzy feeling one got when anticipating something wonderful.

With this thought in mind he turned to Hermione. "I don't know," he repeated. "But I can't wait till tomorrow."

She simply smiled at him in agreement.

Author's Note: This is actually no indication of where the fic is going because it'll get REALLY angsty, and the plot will probably surprise you as it unfolds...I hope. Well, did you like it? Hate it? Have any constructive criticism? Then drop me a line at or simply leave a review. If you want to flame me, that's fine, go on ahead, and I'll just have a barbecue.

Pearl Drop Angel

Every parent leaves something behind for their children to remember them by. Lily Evans didn't know, when she left her diary behind, that it would help her son into knowing her and himself...or did she?

Disclaimer: I'm just borrowing characters and situations for entertainment purposes, personal and non, and am making no money out of it. And all I own beside the plot are: the Diggorinta (which only makes a brief appearance in this chapter and then gets mentioned on and off), the Stalker Mob (which is very annoying to own because they keep on bugging me about putting snogging scenes between themselves and Harry), Kevin Creevy (which is really scary to have around), the time capsule, and what's in it, including Lily's diary. Don't sue, all I own are professional fashion designing markers and they only cost about euro 4.16 and they're not worth it because the ink runs out right away, and the chargers cost an arm and a leg. Just...don't sue, it's not worth it.

Warning: Dispite the fact that the prologue (and a good hefty chunk of this chapter) is rather comical, the fanfiction itself is made up of tortured, angst-filled romances (I'm not kidding), and we'll start to see that at the end of this chapter. Don't worry, though, I'm a professional when it comes to comic relief (that's the whole purpose of the first years, even though in this chapter they don't show up).

Anyway, I hope you enjoy as much as the prologue. I loved the reviews, even if they were few (when I first posted this on I got 12 just on the prologue and am now standing at 233 for 14 chaps! That just really makes me happy)! Thank you all so very, very, much. Please keep them coming, even if I'm practically almost done writing the whole thing it's still really nice to get these.

And now: on with the fic.

Harry Potter and the Knowledge of a Mother

Chapter 1: The Time Capsule

Since there were never any lessons the fist few days at Hogwarts—just to let everyone get used to the castle again—the first day after

their arrival the seventh year Gryffindors, led by a very proud Head Girl by the name of Hermione Granger (could it have been anyone else?), were making their way to the courtyard just as they had been told the previous night by McGonagall—who was patiently waiting for them there.

Again, Harry felt his scar tingling the same way he'd felt the night before, and slowly, gingerly, he placed his fingers on it. It had never felt that way before...it felt...pleasant. And nothing that had ever concerned his scar had been pleasant.

Hermione was looking at him rather strangely—she was worried, he could tell—so he gave her a reassuring half smirk, dropped his hand, and turned his attention to the stern looking teacher. McGonagall, after making sure that they were all there, quickly said with a barely concealed smile of anticipation, "Very well, follow me!" She turned on her heels wordlessly and began to pace with long strides towards the lake.

The students followed.

The walk was long as they kept on siding on the lakeside. It felt like they had nearly made the round of the blasted far-too-big mass of water, knowing quite well that they had barely even begun to circle it, until finally McGonagall started to head a little off to the left into a clearing filled with very unusual looking stones. Some were the size of fists, others seemed boulders. They were all mostly covered in brownish moss, and far too regularly shaped to have been non magical. They were also placed at very regular intervals, telling that someone had placed them there.

The smell itself that was in the clearing told of misty magical memories and dreams, and the fact that the entire area was enveloped in a very light white fog only added to the atmosphere.

Then, interrupting everyone's observations of the grounds, McGonagall spoke again. "Very well, Gryffindors," and with this she pulled something out of her pockets. "Can anyone tell me what this is?" And she opened her palms to show a very tiny creature that seemed covered in the same moss as the stones. To Harry it looked

like it had the body of a seal, but without the teeth, and the "limbs"—or whatever they were for they looked like oval paddles—were a lot larger and so thin that they seemed transparent. As he made these assertions the tiny creature spread large wings—when open the complete width was about the length of an outstretched arm—and lifted itself in the air. The wings were just as thin as the limbs, but with the sunlight streaming through them—for they were almost completely see-through as well—showed a rippling of very small muscles and vessels.

What a fascinating little creature that was. Harry smiled when the thing opened its mouth and let out a tiny, but very high-pitched, sound that to him seemed like the word "Dig!"

Hermione's hand, of course, shot up.

"Yes, Miss Granger?"

"It's a Diggorinta," Hermione replied. "It is a magical creature that can assert the character of a person, or group of people, and find the object—which is usually specified by the owner—that most would suit, and brings it to light by digging."

"Very good, Miss Granger, ten points," McGonagall complimented. "Now," she began to explain the point to their excursion, "the Diggorinta is very powerful, albeit small, and it never fails its purpose. Its purpose today is to help us find the stone that would most suit you young Gryffindors," and at this a lot of eyebrows shot up. Why would they need a stone?

"This place, as a matter of fact, is the Gryffindors' Forever Remember Garden. Beneath each stone there are the history, actions, and thoughts of another already graduated Gryffindor class such as yours," and with this she signaled the Diggorinta to do its work with a nod, to which the creature replied with another very happy "Dig!"

With a few flaps of moss colored wings and sounds of "Dig!" the Diggorinta flew swiftly around the students, pausing for a second before each one of them, and moving on. Ron, Hermione, and Harry were the last three left, and the creature went about them in the same

ordered mentioned, pausing in front of Hermione longer than it had before Ron, and in front of Harry far longer than it had with anyone else put together.

Finally it let out a particularly loud and enthusiastic "Dig!" before turning around and floating to a particularly large boulder and sitting atop it. After a second it seemed that the moss from the stone and the Diggorinta's skin had become one thing all together, and with a flap of its wings lifted itself and it's perch in the air. It detached itself from the stone, leaving it hovering about two meters in the air, and flew beneath it.

Flying so low that it's wings touched the ground, the Diggorinta drew a circle in the moss, of the same shape and size as the boulder, and lifted itself back up, all the while flapping its limbs frantically like a dog digging in the yard to hide his bone. As it did this, the wet ground seemed to split, and...something that was beneath began to push itself out.

And then, after the earth beneath their feet had stopped shaking, something that resembled an old battered trunk laid hovering only centimeters from their feet.

"Oh, how strange it would be this one," McGonagall commented.

Harry wondered what she meant, but Hermione managed to answer that when she said, "Harry! Look!" while pointing flabbergasted at the lock of the trunk.

There, before his eyes, in rusty gold, was engraved an image of a wolf standing in front of a stag and a big dog, neck stretched toward the sky as if it were howling. Very small, at the wolf's feet was a mouse, and behind the animals, a cloaked shadow, and an eye, which—as Harry had studied—represented a Seer.

This couldn't have been...could it?

"Now, I don't know what has been put into this trunk, but I do know that the class that left it here had some very creative students, and I'm sure everyone of you has heard of them at least once," she

announced, and then looked straight at Harry and his two friends. "The Marauders."

Despite the fact that Harry had already guessed it, hearing the words had made it settle in a completely different way. In that trunk there were things that had to do with Wormtail, the blasted traitor, and Moony and Padfoot, that since his third year had been surrogate fathers to him, and then...of Prongs, his real father, and of his mother.

Hearing McGonagall say that was like having the wind knocked out of him. Thousands of thoughts ran through his mind. What did they leave? What's it going to tell me? What if I find out more about my parents? His mind asked in trepidation. Could this possibly help him into knowing the mother and father that he was never permitted to have? Remus and Sirius never told him much about them or their years in Hogwarts, and he guessed that—even after sixteen years—the loss of two close friends, the betrayal of another, and far too many years of lies, deceit and pain were still too fresh in their minds. Harry had never pressed them.

But maybe here was their chance—for some reason Hermione and Ron were included—to find out about people that Harry had only seen in his dreams and in the mirror of Erised. But then again, was it? After all, in the trunk there were probably just a stack of moving pictures and a yearbook (at least, that's what Muggles put in time capsules, and he guessed wizards weren't very different), but then again, these were the Marauders.

Oh, boy, he was confused! As always, he looked to Hermione for help and reassurance. And it looked like her thoughts were running along the same track as his. Though she'd never come out and said it, he knew her—always-overactive—curiosity toward his parents. She was fascinated by the stories told of them, foggy as they were. Especially his mother, Lily, fascinated her. And that was understandable, for they had so many things in common. Beautiful, smart, capable witches born of Muggles, both Head Girls, that had found themselves trapped in friendships—which were probably more harm than good—with men who seemed unable to stay out of trouble, and caught in battles against the Dark Lord.

Actually, Harry had always been very interested in knowing about his mother very much as well. For some reason, he could imagine what his father had been like—maybe only because of the strong physical resemblance that he held to him—but his mother to him was a mystery. Each time he thought of her, he found himself imagining her quite like Hermione, but that was probably simply because of the fact that Hermione was, by far, the strongest girl he had ever—and would probably ever—meet and, of course, because of the strong feelings he had towards her. He liked the thought of the two women of his life being so alike...but were they?

He had to stop his train of thought because McGonagall had walked up to the trunk, pointed her wand at it, and called out "Alohomora!" and...nothing happened. A deep frown appeared between her eyebrows, and she began ticking off other unlocking spells, all to no avail. After about ten tries, she huffed loudly and openly gawked at the offending thing.

Whispers were spreading throughout the students.

"Well, these were the Marauders, they must have put a load full of charms and spells."

"It's going to take us days to get this thing open, if not more!"

"Do you think there's anything dangerous in there?"

"Of course there is!"

Thoughts like these were spreading like a wildfire.

Harry looked at Ron, then at Hermione, and he found them wearing the same knowing smirk on their faces that he had. His own growing wider he raised his hand and called, "Professor?"

Surprised, McGonagall snapped her eyes away from the mad trunk to look at her student.

"Yes, Mr. Potter?"

"May I try?" Again, a deep furrow appeared between the teacher's eyebrows. Not knowing what else to try, she gave him the clear. Harry pulled his wand out of his robes, pointed it at the case at his feet, and pronounced loud and clear the words. "I solemnly swear I'm up to no good!"

Laughter spread through the rest of the students and chuckled sentences along the lines of "Harry's gone mad to say that in front of McGonagall" were whispered behind hands.

That was until, of course, the case started shaking wildly still in midair, while shooting sparks from the engraved golden seal. Loud gasps were heard all around, and everyone—but Harry, Ron, and Hermione—backed several paces away from the maddened object.

Whistles started to accompany the sparks, which were actually starting to resemble miniature butterfly fireworks. The students were backing up even more, and, finally, when the sparks had become blinding, the whistling a high pitched squeal that made everyone grind their teeth, and the trunk itself had started to spin faster and faster around until it had made a whirlwind around itself that had the Diggorinta desperately trying to keep safe in midair until...

It stopped.

Everything.

Suddenly.

It stopped.

No more sparks, or whistling, or spinning, or shaking. It had gone back to the same position as it had before Harry had pronounced the words.

"Harry, what did you do?" He heard Seamus ask terrified, but the trio turned to give him a look of utter confidence before going back to study the object of their friends' horrors.

And then, again, it began to shake, and finally, with a loud bursting sound the lid opened and fireworks began to shoot high into the air in a very stunning pyrotechnics performance, not unlike lava erupting from the Vesuvius when it wiped out Pompeii. None of them were harmful, for they shot very high into the air and burst into colorful magical shapes, especially of animals, that actually moved before fading out. Many represented a mouse doing various things, running, hitting the knot on the Whomping Willow, scurrying about and such, and Harry felt his hands clench until they drew blood as he thought of the person that had—obviously—charmed the candles.

He felt Hermione's hand on his shoulders and he unconsciously relaxed his grip and his stance.

Then there was a wolf, howling at the moon, biting himself to keep from hurting others, sleeping, and simply walking in the streets of Hogsmeade. A dog, large and gruff, howling, barking, running. And finally, a big, wonderful deer stomping through the forest, drinking from the lake, and then, the last exploding candle represented the beautiful stag nuzzling into a girl's neck. Lily's neck, and in turn she kissed the spot above its nose with a soundless giggle, and smiled at the people that, mesmerized, had been watching the show from below.

And, just when everyone thought the show was over, another burst came from the trunk, and one last image showed in the sky. A sign that read, "Mischievous is done!"

Harry smiled.

Everyone behind him now stood with his or her jaws touching the mossy ground.

"You can come closer now," Hermione said as she bent over to look at the contained items of the trunk. Slowly, apprehensively, the students—along with McGonagall—did.

"This was definitely Potter's idea," the professor mumbled. Everyone heard.

"What?"

"Well, anything related to fireworks and Filibusters was always his doing. He would come up with the idea, and Pettigrew would brew the potions," she answered. Strangely, some students thought, her tone was quite bitter when she spoke Wormtail's name.

Cautiously, the rest of the group made its way to the trunk, only to be hit in full by a blue wrapped bundle of giggles that flew at all of their stomachs with the force of an atomic missile.

"Hey what—!"

"What the bloody hell?!" (This was Ron.)

"What IS that?"

And the bundle spoke.

"I'm Cicciobello!"

"What's a bloody Chee-cho-bel-loh?" Ron asked with a skeptical eyebrow at the bundle.

"I'M Cicciobello!" the bundle repeated offended, and this time, everyone noticed how very childish and high-pitched the voice was. But...hey! This was a baby!

"No, not him!" McGonagall exclaimed.

"Hi-ya prof! It's been a while!" The 'Cicciobello' cried, and, in salutation, went over, pulled down his pants, sitting on the woman's hat, and—with a rather large 'splat'—left a little scented gift there. Then, giggling madly, pulled its pants back up and flew high into the air. McGonagall was in fumes while the students were rolling on the ground laughing.

"It's a doll," Hermione said, as she looked up. And she was right. The bundle was, in truth a very likely imitation of a live baby, even in size. As she said this, the baby turned to look at her, and then to Ron and

Harry. At the sight of the last, it gasped loudly and flew straight into Harry's gut, knocking the wind out of him, all the while letting out loud cries of "Dada!"

"DADA?!" The class asked collectively.

"Dada?" Harry repeated as well.

"Dada!" The Cicciobello exclaimed again. It took Harry quite a while to extricate the deviled doll off of him, but when he finally did, it looked at him again in the face, and gasped. "You're not daddy!"

"DADDY?" The class collectively screeched again.

"Uh...no. Sorry. I'm not daddy," Harry replied nervously. The doll seemed to deflate.

"No Cicciobello, he's not your daddy," McGonagall told him.

"Then...who is he?"

"Your daddy's son," she replied in a completely matter-of-factly manner.

The doll—again—gasped. It seemed to do that a lot. "Dada had a son?" McGonagall nodded. Again Cicciobello looked at Harry, this time, seeming to decipher him. And then, suddenly, it shouted out, "Brother!" and, again, threw itself at his gut.

"BROTHER?!" when was the class going to stop screeching like that?

"Oh, brother!" Harry sighed as he pinched the bridge of his nose with his fingers.

Cicciobello giggled.

"Very well Gryffindors, let's see...what else these students placed in this," McGonagall said, her voice losing enthusiasm with every word that she got out.

And they did just that. Although the rest of the contents of the trunk weren't as exciting as the fireworks, or the possessed Cicciobello, they found them all rather interesting. There were, as expected, loads of moving pictures—most of them representing interesting pranks that the Marauders had pulled on Slytherins (Snape's younger face was quite reoccurring)—and a yearbook, telling of each of the Gryffindors that had graduated that year. In addition, though, there were loads of different—seemingly—non-hazardous things (such as cards, and handkerchiefs, and nail polish--?--), all attached to a little instruction handbook. Marauders' inventions obviously.

They spent the good part of three hours all sitting, laughing, and enjoying the creativity of students that had attended the school far before they were even born, and, when it finally seemed there were no more interesting objects in the trunk, Lavender looked into it and saw something that almost everyone had written off as of no importance. Picking it up she asked Professor McGonagall what it was about.

Piqued by the girl's question, the teacher walked over, and took in her hands the thick leather bound book that was held out to her. At first her eyes went wide, and then she opened to the front page, as though to check out something that she knew was true but couldn't quite have been possible. "This can't be," she mumbled.

But it was.

She stared at whatever must have been written on that front page for quite a long time. The only thing that had managed to keep her from drowning into the thick book was the voice of Lavender Brown asking, "What is it, Professor?" At this the addressed woman took in a sharp breath turning her gaze away from the mesmerizing page, and looked at the girl before her, although not seeing her at all.

Another second went by, and finally she spoke.

"Mr. Potter, come here," she ordered, not a note of expression in her voice. Harry, who was, at that moment, reading the instructions, which had come with the nail polish along with Ron, looked up confused, and shrugging, went over to see what his teacher wanted.

Again, McGonagall stared at him for a second. She seemed to be sizing him, trying to decide if he was ready for whatever it was that she was about to present him with.

This only served to make the young man even more confused.

"Yes, professor?" He asked as an encouragement.

Finally the teacher came to her decision, and extended her hand out to him, holding the book for him to take. Even more confused, Harry took the professed book, and held it, keeping his boggled gaze onto the woman. "Open to the first page," she instructed. Looking down, he did just that. He opened the hard front cover to the first page which had only three words scribbled onto it in a pretty, orderly, legible handwriting, which had obviously belonged to a young girl.

At first, he stared. The words were there, ink on paper, black on white, but they just weren't registering. And then, when they did, the book slipped from his numb fingers, and hit the ground with a muted 'thump'.

Hermione, which had walked over in curiosity, knit her eyebrows before kneeling and picking up the fallen item. She opened to the same page that had caused so much staring, and, reading the words, finally understood why they had been so overwhelmed by those three simple words.

Actually, they weren't even words.

They were a name.

There, clear as day, stood the name: Lily Marianne Evans.

Her mouth open, and her eyes clouded, she, too, looked at McGonagall. "This isn't...is it?" She asked.

"Yes, Miss Granger," the professor confirmed. "It's Mrs. Potter's Hogwarts diary," she explained, and, turning to look at Harry, told him, even cleared, "This is your mother's diary."

And silence fell between them.

"Uhm...professor?" Again, Lavender snapped everyone out of their thoughts.

"Yes, Miss Brown?"

"I think it's time to head back to the castle," she ventured uncertainly.

This seemed to bring McGonagall to her usual self. "Yes, quite right," and saying that she turned toward the rest of her Gryffindors. "Very well everyone, put everything you found back into the trunk. Don't worry, it will be kept in your Head Girl's room, so ask her, and you will access it all you want with her permission. You may discuss what to put in your own memory case amongst yourselves. Your case will be buried within the end of the last week of school. Now, we will make our return to the castle for lunch," she explained, and then turned back to Harry. "You will not be required to put the book back in the case, Mr. Potter," she told him with a barely concealed smile. "If that diary has a place, it is in your hands," she finished, and began to head back to Hogwarts with the rest of the Gryffindors following close behind.

On the walk back, Harry, walking at the very end of the line, found himself clutching the book to his heart with one arm, and Hermione's fingers (she was walking very closely on his right) with his hand.

o*o

At lunch, the seventh years (of all houses) had secluded themselves from their younger counterparts to plan well what to put in their own time capsules. Hermione, as Head Girl, along with the two seventh year prefects, had the assignment of writing everything down, keeping record, and basically organizing the whole thing. As her peers shot off all kinds of different ideas, she diligently reported everything onto a fresh piece of parchment, completely ignoring her lunch, although, Harry could tell, her mind wasn't with it.

He guessed it was with his mother's diary, much like his own was. As much as he tried to bring himself to participate, he simply couldn't. So

instead, he listened to Ron tick off all kinds of absurdities, demonstrating to the world that he was, in fact, Fred and George Weasley's little brother. Nearly everything that the redhead had suggested had been enthusiastically approved and placed on the list, which, outside of his creative implications, held the same usual things, such as yearbooks, and pictures, reports of major events and a hall of fame (which, everyone was sure, would mostly be composed of Ronald Weasley, Hermione Lynn Granger, and Harry James Potter).

As Ron was ranting about placing carnivorous frogs into the case to come out in much the same manner that the fireworks had, McGonagall tapped her goblet with her spoon, getting the attention of the entire school. Dumbledore, it seemed, had to make an announcement.

The hall went mostly quiet, so the aged wizard spoke.

"It has been brought to my attention that our Quidditch field, is, unfortunately, not going to be available for the next several months. We have a, rather growing and annoying, infestation of carnivorous beetlesquash. Now, thankfully, they have limited themselves to our Quidditch field, and we've been able to prevent them from expanding their territory, but, since we do not wish to have our Quidditch teams and spectators eaten alive, we will have to postpone any games until after Christmas, and possibly more," at this he stopped, waiting for the outraged mass of students to calm down.

Ron could be heard throughout the castle with his shouts of "What? But you can't! I mean it's Quidditch! What's school without Quidditch?" Only Hermione's strong slap to the back of his head managed to stop his ranting, making him, instead, yelp in pain.

"Yes, Mr. Weasley. School would be a much less interesting place without Quidditch, which is why I said postponed. The games won't be canceled, but will, once they start, be performed all in a much shorter period of time, and later in the year. You will still hold your practices like you regularly would, just not inside the Quidditch field. The head of your house will tell you where your team will practice, and I would advise you, Mr. Weasley, to take this as an advantage, for, now, you have all the time you want on your own training ground,

which, you won't be sharing with other teams. That'll be all," Dumbledore explained, and with this sat back down in a manner that told that there wouldn't be any more arguing over the topic.

Ron, who had been Gryffindor Keeper since fifth, and Captain since sixth, and was all around the most Quidditch obsessed person left in the wake of Oliver Wood, was, still, outraged. "Who cares if we can train all we want? They'll probably put us in the courtyard where everybody can see us and study our moves! What would be the point of practice then?" He began to spew forth all questions of the sort, and continued, and continued, not even realizing that Professor McGonagall was behind him when he moved on to speak of her. "And how could McGonagall allow this!? I mean, wasn't she supposed to be the biggest Quidditch supporting teacher of the school? I can't believe she'd let this happen! How—?" He was finally interrupted by said teacher's very, very, stern voice.

"Mr. Weasley!"

Suddenly, Ron stopped, paled, gulped, and slowly turned at the sound of the higher-than-usual-pitch that McGonagall had used pronouncing his name. "Y--?" He began, but, realizing that his voice was far too squeaky, cleared his throat and tried again. "Yes?"

"I just came over to inform you of which grounds you will be allowed to use as practice fields," she said sternly. Of course, Ron should have expected this, as he was Captain, and therefore, the one that should have been informed. Still rather peeved looking, McGonagall stood so that she was eyelevel with the redhead and whispered so that only he, Harry, and Hermione could hear. "The Gryffindor Forever Remeber Garden," she revealed in a very secretive manner.

Hermione gasped. "But wasn't that supposed to stay secret until seventh year for everybody? Outside of Ron and Harry, all the others are sixth year and below," she protested.

"Yes, but they don't need to know what its name is or what it's for until they reach seventh, do they?" She asked mischievously, and they all could guess the teacher liked to keep secrets. "However, it is a perfect location, for it can't be seen from any part of the castle,

since it is hidden by several charms, and it's secluded and hard to find. There, you will be able to practice all you want with no interruptions, and very little possibility of being spied on," she explained, and, deciding she'd said enough, stood back up straight, and marched back to her place at the faculty's table.

Ron was extatic and couldn't shut up about it for the rest of the evening.

Harry and Hermione were both quiet, not listening to their blabbering friend, completely absorbed in thoughts of Lily Evans' diary, and whatever it could possibly bare to them.

o*o

It was late, and, as Hermione made the last round of the school, checking if everything was alright, she couldn't manage to keep her thoughts from wandering to the thick, still in exceptional state diary that had been found not even 24 hours before.

Mostly, when everyone heard of what it was, they all said, "Great! This way you'll find out more ways to fend off You-Know-Who!" But she knew very well that Harry, as much as she, was more concerned with what the woman might have been like, what she thought, what she said, how she lived at Hogwarts and how she lived at all.

Hermione had always been fascinated by the idea of her.

She, having been raised by wonderful loving parents all her life, had no idea what it might have been like without them at all, not even knowing what they were like, what they smelt like, how it would feel to come down to breakfast in the morning and hearing "Goodmorning, Harry," or something of the sort. She knew very well that his aunt Petunia had probably never wished him a 'goodmorning' in his entire life.

How can Harry be so wonderful when he's been raised by those self centered barbarians? She asked herself as she whispered the password to the Fat Lady. Maybe, if she could read that diary, she could find out what his parents had been like. Find out if just being

related to them made him what he was, or if he was just like that of his own nature.

Even though she was Head Girl she'd asked to be able to stay in the Gryffindor tower, so she had been showed a portrait that would have led her, from the girl's dorm, directly to her rooms, and she much preferred to use those. She felt at home there, and the Head Girl-Boy tower was so desolate.

As she was about to reach the stairs that would bring her to the Gryffindor dormitories she stopped upon noticing that someone had been sitting at the foot of the overstuffed couch in front of the hearth. She didn't need to closer inspect the person, for nobody else in Gryffindor could have such unruly pitchblack hair, and those broad shoulders and lanky figure.

"Harry," she whispered as to not jolt him out of his thoughts while making her way around the couch. "What are you still doing here?" She asked as her hands found her hips, but despite the fact that she stood in her lecturing pose, her voice held absolutely no reprimand.

She just watched him as he turned his head slowly to look up at her, noticing how he was slumping, more than sitting, on the carpet covering the cold surface of the floor. His mother's diary lay unopened on his lap. Dropping her arms at her sides with a heavy sigh, she sat on the couch next to him, her calves brushing his arm, putting a hand on his mess of hair, gently scraping his scalp in a reassuring manner. "What are you still doing here?" She repeated softly, worry and uncertainty clear, now, in her voice.

"Couldn't sleep," he mumbled expressionlessly, but she saw clearly how his hands clutched even tighter the book between his hands.

"Are you scared of it?" She asked, still quietly, for breaking the comfortable, conspirative silence seemed like a crime to her.

Harry seemed to contemplate the question for a second. "Would it be stupid?" He asked finally.

Hermione shook her head. "No, I could understand it if you were," she reassured him. "You've never truly known her, Harry. Even if you wanted to, you never had a chance to find out what she was like, and, in a way, that always gave you a chance to make up your own mind about her," Hermione explained.

"Would it be bad if I said I was afraid that she didn't live up to my expectations?" He asked again. He looked like a small child afraid to say that he liked to fantasize because scared of adults reactions.

"No," she replied, fully meaning it. "I'd be scared, too," she continued, "I've somewhat an idea of her, too, but Harry, this is your mother. No matter what, I don't think you could ever bring yourself to be disappointed in her, even when she'd different from what you expect," she finished.

"Would you--?" He began, but stopped himself. He looked to be debating in his own head whether or not asking the next question was appropriate. Oh, come on, Harry! This is Hermione! The worst thing she could do is say 'No'. And so he asked. "Would you mind...reading it out loud for me?" He asked nervously, and then, almost as though he had to justify his question, added, "Maybe, with a girl's voice I'd get more of an idea."

He was so vulnerable at that moment, afraid that she would say 'no' and leave him alone in a journey in which her company was absolutely necessary (at least she hoped), that she felt the tell-tale stinging behind her eyes. "I'd love to," she replied quietly, and extended her hand out to take the diary, and slowly, apprehensively, Harry gave it to her.

He didn't move to get closer or change position to hear better. For some reason, he preferred to stay as he was, the flames in the fireplace reflected in his spectacles and warming away the anxiety that he'd worked up during the day. All he did was lean his head over slightly so that it rested against her knee. He'd always wished that he could touch Hermione the same way Ron did, like the way he'd laid back to back with her at lunch, but for some reason, to Harry, the small touches like this were already so overwhelming, that anything more would be dangerous to their platonic relationship. He felt her

hands scrape his scalp soothingly again in a comforting manner, and closed his eyes at the touch.

They'd laid like that for a while before Hermione stopped stalling and opened to the first page of the diary. She realized that her hands were trembling. She was nervous. Over the years she'd, in some way, come to idolize this woman, for the way that she'd stayed close to James throughout the tough times, kept the Marauders' secrets, and sacrificed her life for that of the boy—man—that sat there with his head resting on her knee! How could she not see this woman as a goddess, for—had it not been for her—Harry might not even be here, and she would have been hopelessly alone. Even her friendship with Ron had come about because of him. She owed him so much, and loved him so much, that, even the image of his mother had become holy to her.

Clearing her voice she began out loud with the date.

August 23rd,

Hello, my name is Lily Evans, I'm going to be eleven soon, and have recently found out that...I'm a Witch! Well, I always knew I was different, but a WITCH! I have to admit that was pretty exciting. Finding out I mean. Just two days ago, a pretty, big, brown owl swooped in the window, dropped a letter on top of the milk jug, and flew right out. My sister Petunia began to scream her head off, but I'd already known that something would have happened that morning. You see, well, not many people besides my parents know about this, but, ever since I was little, I would get this feelings sometimes. Even visions once in a while. Of the future, the present happening somewhere else, or the past.

I never told anyone, because, well...it's not normal to feel these things, and, even if my parents were actually proud of it (they said it made me even more special) almost everyone else, especially Petunia, thinks it's scary.

Anyway, that morning I felt like something wonderful would happen, something that would change my life forever, bring me to a place where I truly belonged. And while I said this to my mom as she put

the bacon on my breakfast plate, I had no idea how true that was. When mom read out loud the letter that had been sent to me, telling me that I'd been accepted to the 'Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry' I thought my heart was going to burst.

I really WAS going to find a place in which I belonged.

Of course, I have friends here, but they always seemed detached. I think they're afraid of some of the things that I made happen a couple of times when mad. Once, when I was eight, at my birthday party, Kiana Jenkins, from down the street, started making fun of my red hair saying that I looked like a carrot, and that my eyes looked like the color that swimming pools turn to when people don't clean them right. Well, usually I don't care when people make fun of my hair, but she was always real mean to me, ever since I was a kid (probably the reason for why she gets along so magnificently with Petunia, I'll bet they just sit together all day talking about how awful I am, and how they can't stand me), so I lost my temper with her, and, as if by magic (and now I know it really WAS magic) she turned purple and an endless stream of EGGS started to come out of her mouth.

Since then, I really didn't make anything so big happen, but still, nobody forgot. I'm sure that at Hogwarts there are lots of people who can do these things, and I won't feel so weird anymore. Mom and Dad were real proud, and promised to take me to Diagon Alley (it was suggested in the letter) for school shopping, and that's what we did today.

It was SO neat! I admit, it took us a real long time to figure out how to get there. We wandered around London for about three hours before stumbling onto a bar called 'The Leaky Cauldron'. For some reason, it seemed just like the place to go for information on how to reach a place where they sold Magic stuff. The people in there were dressed rather strangely, but they all seemed to enjoy themselves much. They seemed nice. Well...maybe not at first, when they all went quiet when seeing us, whispering something like "Muggles", but when dad asked how to get to Diagon Alley, the man behind the counter (his name was Tom) asked if I was to attend Hogwarts. Dad said yes, and then everybody congratulated me and wished me good luck.

Petunia didn't seem to like it much when he brought us out back in front of a dead end. All there was in front of us was a brick wall, and, well...it did seem much like a joke, but then Tom tapped a couple of bricks, and they all started MOVING! Yes, moving! And they made a passageway that we crossed.

And then it was like being inside a fairy tale. The street was small, and crooked, and some of the buildings looked like they were made of cards. Everything was magic! People went around with WANDS! There were candy shops with the strangest things, like Every-flavor+1 Beans and Chocolate FROGS, books with pictures that moved, strange creatures walking around, and so much more that it would take me years to write about.

The things that I liked the most were Ollivanders, where I got my first wand (who would have ever thought that I would one day have a magic WAND! He told me all the descriptions about it, but all I remember is that inside there's a unicorn's hair, and supposedly unicorns have seer's powers, and it's supposed to be good for Charms), a store that sold everything for a sport called Quidditch, which is played on BROOMSTICKS! And then there was the animal shop. In there, all the animals could do something magical! Mom and Dad, bought an owl to keep at home (the clerk in the store told us that people in the magical world communicate long distance with owl post), I don't need one because the school has a lot to let the students borrow, and for me, they bought a beautiful cat. She's red with green colored eyes (like me!), and a fluffy tail and puffy whiskers, she looks half persian. Petunia said she looks like her legs are crooked and the fur is mangy, but I think she's beautiful. But maybe that's because she's magical. Anyway, I named her Rajah (because she always looks everyone from down her nose, like an exotic queen), and I'm already in love with her.

Anyway, it was in Diagon Alley that I bought this diary. The salesclerk said that it was best if I waited a couple of years before writing in it, because it's magical and hard to control, but I liked it too much, and decided to write in it anyway. You see, I'm afraid that if I don't write all the unusually wonderful things that I'm sure are going to happen to me, I'll forget them, and I'll miss out on beautiful memories that could have been with me but that wouldn't be. And I hate that thought.

But it's late now, the day has been long (and wonderful), and it's time for me to go to bed. But since I know for certain that after all this excitement I won't get a wink of sleep, I'm going to pull out one of the books that Dad bought me for fun (he's always spoiling me) and read that until I actually do fall asleep. This book's called "Hogwarts: A History" and we got it because, maybe, if I read it, I'll understand a little more of the place that I'm about to go into and spend a whole of SEVEN years in.

The idea's scary, but exciting, and I can't wait.

Goodnight.

Lily

At that Hermione stopped reading. For a second it was quiet. She'd stopped because she'd felt that, for both herself and Harry, this night shouldn't have gone any further. Even though Lily hadn't said anything particularly different from what any other muggle born Hogwarts student might have after having been to Diagon Alley, it was, in a sense, overwhelming.

This was what Lily had been like at eleven (almost eleven, she corrected herself). A young girl, full of expectation and anxiety. And power, Hermione added in her mind. To do that thing with the eggs at the age of eight was something, and, in addition, Lily has some sort of seer's power. Now, it was a widely known fact that Hermione didn't believe Trelawny's codswallop and would have gladly shoved it in her face, but Lily was different. She was eleven when she wrote this, and didn't know anything of Inner Eyes and Divination. But she did have visions.

Hermione believed that there were people capable of sensing things around them. She didn't believe that they could be taught however (at least she'd come to believe that during her third year), especially by a fake like Trelawny. Even if, apparantly, even that charlatan made a couple of real prophesies every once in a while.

But that wasn't the matter at hand.

Finally, she spoke the question.

"Are you disappointed?"

Harry was quiet for a second, and she scraped her nails across his scalp again. She liked doing that. It almost seemed to her that the affection that she placed in the little gesture seeped right through to him and warmed him out of his dark thoughts. Besides, she thought to herself bitterly, this is probably as close as I'll ever get to him. Anyhow, that small sign of encouragement, and quietly, almost as though it was a sigh, he whispered the word. "No."

She smiled down at him, and he turned to grin at her.

"She kind of sounds like you," he went on, and she raised her eyebrows at him. "You know, a red cat with crooked legs, 'Hogwarts: A History,'" he jested, and she threw a pillow at his head, which was still, by the way, comfortably resting on her knee. She had to push the little voice in her head back as it pointed out how natural it felt to be like that with him.

"Why you—!" She gasped as he pulled the pillow out of her hands and hit her with it (although very gently).

They didn't pursue the pillow fight. They just looked at each other for a second. Hermione wanted to tell him what she knew about Lily's power, as, for certain, Harry had paid as little attention to that as possible, and only cared about the girl's opinions of Diagon Alley, and life itself, but, then again, it was best like this. Let him enjoy his mother for what she was. A witch, certainly, and a powerful one, but a girl above all, and a woman later in life.

"Let's continue tomorrow," she decided. Maybe letting him digest what the brief introduction revealed would be better than hitting him with everything all at once. "Now it's late," she explained, and he nodded.

"Okay," he agreed, and, before he even realized it and could stop himself, he turned to face her, stood on his knees so that he was eyelevel with her, and dropped a soft kiss on her forehead. "Thank you," he whispered. He had to force himself not to look at her as he stood. Looking at her would ruin everything. Whispering a soft goodnight he made his way to the stair that led to the dormitory, closely followed by Hermione (who was trying desperately to keep her blushing and her hopes down).

They had both been so absorbed in their thought that neither had noticed how a certain redheaded male had been listening to the whole exchange from the beginning and had run to his dorm room scowling before the two would see him.

That night, Harry laid wide awake, thousands of thoughts in his troubled mind as he remembered his mother, and thought of Hermione. Had he looked over to his best friend's bed, he would have seen Ron still awake, and scowling more than he ever had in his entire life.

To be continued.

Author's note: Ah, finally, I'm getting into the plot. Oh, and the mob of crazy stalkers, along with Kevin Creevy didn't show in this chapter because I didn't think they were necessary (and because, for most of the day Harry kept to himself trying to decide whether or not to actually OPEN Lily's diary), and besides, for now, the crazed Cicciobello was enough. By the way, after the time capsule, he ran off to get reacquainted with the castle, and therefore we won't know what he's been up to til next chapter (hehehe, I'm so evil). By the way, Cicciobello is owned by an Italian toy company, Giochi Preziosi, and if you want to know what Cicciobello looks like to go: .it/cicciobello/ Oh, and for Lily's middle name, well, I just made that up, as well as Hermione, if they're incorrect, tell me and I'll fix.

Anyway, you know the drill, if you've read, review, or mail me at for any comments, criticisms or flames (go ahead and I'll have a BBQ).

Ja

Pearl

very parent leaves something behind for their children to remember them by. Lily Evans didn't know, when she left her diary behind, that it would help her son into knowing her, and himself...or did she?

Disclaimer: Okay, it's a widely known fact that everything but the plot, the Diggorinta (which won't be showing up anymore), the diary, the crazy fangirls, Kevin Creevy, and the possessed Ciccibello (and Ciccibello IS an existing doll), are not mine, but the very talented J.. So you can't sue, and, even if you did, you wouldn't even get my professional markers because, just yesterday, they had just seemed to suck each other dry, so I don't even have those anymore. Oh, well, thank god for fanfiction.

Warning: My computer did not agree with me, so it might not be up to my standard of grammatical perfection (since my spellchecker broke down and I don't have a beta), also, I was in a lousy mood, and also in a hurry, when writing so the scenes that were meant to be funny and witty won't be (I'm sure), and that will lower the whole standard of the chapter because this is basically all introspection and thoughts. Once I finish the whole story I will one day go back and re-edit, but for now, I'm in a hurry to move on ahead so that I will soon reach the better parts. You have been warned.

And now: on with the fic:

Harry Potter and the Knowledge of a Mother

Chapter 2: The Diary

That morning Harry awoke late.

He'd fallen asleep shortly before sunrise (the sky was already lightening outside the window before he nodded off to dreamland) and now he was late for breakfast.

He'd dressed in a hurry and run down to the Common Room, expecting it to be empty.

Well, maybe Hermione will be there, but no-one else, he thought to himself.

Boy, was he wrong.

As a matter of fact, the second he took the last five-step jump, with which he'd cleared the whole landing in only six strides, a young, female, and, very likely, insane, voice shouted: "There he is!" Therefore snapping Harry's eyes and attention upon herself.

Oh, crap! He, very eloquently, thought.

Before he even realized what was going on, a thick mob of celebrity obsessed teenagers had tackled him with squeals. Since he had been pushed with his stomach on the ground, he really couldn't see much, but he felt the weight of at least four girls sprawled across his body, a pair of hands was strangling him trying to get his tie off his neck, two others were trying to take his robe while the other four were still on top of him, making the task hard, and he'd even felt someone trying to rip off his belt despite the fact that the belt buckle was on the front of his pants, and, therefore, unreachable.

Then, two, very heavy, feet, stepped close to him, one on each side of his head (actually one was standing on his nose, the other on his hair). The feet were apparently covered in very punk, black leather boots completely covered in spikes, with a pair of scary looking stirrups on the back. He hoped the owner wouldn't step closer because a couple of the spikes were very close to his eyes (he dimly realized that he didn't have his glasses on anymore).

And then he heard the still undeveloped voice of the speaker (trying his hardest to sound gruff) speak to the raging, out of control sea of adolescent hormones.

He groaned to himself, as best he could with that heavy boot standing on his nose anyway, and hoped this was just a bad dream.

The sea of raging, out of control adolescent hormones wasn't enough. Kevin Creevy, had been waiting there as well, probably thinking that his main job as a self proclaimed bodyguard was to defend him from the aforementioned sea.

His nose was telling Harry that Kevin wasn't doing a very good job, so far.

"Yo! Get off!" He heard the boy shout. Yes, Kevin, that'll do it! He thought sarcastically.

And, as expected, the girls didn't get off.

"GET OFF PEOPLE!" He hollered, this time, managing to sound menacing. For a second it seemed to work, for, even if for a very brief moment, the girls stopped their unearthly squealing, and, Harry guessed, looked at the young boy.

Please, let them be scared of him! Please, let them be scared of him! Harry chanted, over and over in his mind. He remembered how in the train, all it took was the sight of Hermione's wand to get them to retreat, but that was different. Hermione was famous. Back in forth year, Rita Skeeter had written many awful things about her (for which she received not less than one howler), and, since it was becoming very disturbing for the entire school, Dumbledore had asked Harry himself to write a short article about her to post in the Daily Prophet. He didn't think it would do much, but apparently it did. After that, Hermione had gone from being the worst witch that had ever walked the Hogwarts grounds, to the heroine that she deserved to be known as.

But Kevin wasn't Hermione. He wasn't famous, or a spectacular wizard, and, more than being scary was ridiculous.

Obviously, the crazy stalkers thought so too.

After a, very brief, sizing of him on the girls' part, they simply went back to their defiling of Harry's person.

Harry, who'd been struggling to get free, decided that, if he held no resistance, maybe it would make their defiling of him quicker and get the whole thing over with.

Kevin didn't agree. He stepped off of his nose and hair (Oh, thank you!) and walked over to grab the girl that was still trying to strangle

Harry. He put his arms around her waist, hefted her (rather effortlessly) off of him, and threw her on the oversized sofa in front of the hearth. Many outraged squeals followed, and, after having trampled all over Harry's poor abused body, the girls went to attack Kevin, who was shouting at Harry: "Run, Potter, I'll keep 'em busy till you're out of reach."

No, Harry thought convinced. He is definitely NOT doing a good job so far!

Off to the side, Harry heard Hermione's familiar sigh of resignation, and a mumbled "Oh, for goodness sake!" He turned his head (or what was left of it) to look at her, as best he could without his glasses on, just in time to see her raise her wand and let out a tired, "Immobilus!"

And, finally, everything went quiet.

His savior walked over to him, and helped him lift himself up. He slightly wobbled on his legs while she did a quick clean up spell on him, setting his clothes back to the way they were, and removing the footprints stains off of him. "Dangs," he mumbled, rubbing his abused nose, and trying to pronounce the words as best he could, still trying to fully grasp what had happened. He looked over to see the full stalker squad from the Hogwarts Express (with a few new additions, he noted grumly) attacking poor Kevin, who, being the only one facing him, blinked blankly at him, and then at the girls. Two pairs of hands were blocked in a rather thorough wringing motion around his neck, two pairs of arms were holding each one of his for three girls to bite his left arm, while two others were trying to rip off the right one. The rest of the mob still hadn't reached the boy. "Uhm...maybe we should free him," he thought out loud. After all he DID make an effort, he finished in his mind.

"Oh la la! A good, vresh ganvaz," a new voice added from somewhere above their heads. Harry and Hermione looked up to see who the high-pitched voice with the cheap, fake, french accent belonged to.

Again, upon recognizing him, Hermione sighed in resignation.

"Cicciobello, what--?" Harry began.

"Don't vurry, bvodah, Shishiobelloh iz he-ah," he reassured, in a rather non reassuring manner, and, as he flew down, Harry noticed that he was now wearing a berret of the kind that usually french painters were represented with, and a large paint stained overall suit.

In his hands were a paint pallet and a very scary looking paintbrush which was longer than Harry himself in height.

"Uhm...what do you plan to do with them?" Harry asked apprehensively. He didn't know Cicciobello all that well yet, after all, he'd come out of the time capsule only the day before, and had disappeared shortly after the "Dada-Brother" thing. Still, from the little that people had told him of the little possessed creature, he tought he had the right to ask.

"Tuvn dem into a mastahpeice!" Cicciobello replied with a great flourish.

"Harry, I think it best for us to leave for breakfast," Hermione suggested, and, looking at Cicciobello, Harry realized that it would have been the only thing to do, for the doll seemed set in his decision to turn the eleven year olds into what he thought was a 'masterpiece'. He just hoped it wasn't as bad as it sounded when he walked through the portrait hole with Hermione following closely.

However, as he took in all the portraits on the stairway, and their apparently unscheduled modifications, he was sure it was far worse than whatever he could possibly come up with.

"Let's hope they survive," Hermione mumbled, and Harry was sure that telling what he thought at that moment wouldn't have been the best thing, so he kept it to himself. However, the thought stayed in his mind.

Of course, Cicciobello wouldn't kill them, and for a very simple reason. After that, he wouldn't be able to use them for fun anymore if he killed them off right away.

Certainly, however, his victims would wish for death everyday of their Hogwarts career until Cicciobello disappeared.

Would he ever?

o*o

They reached the breakfast table a short time later, to find that, thankfully, people were still only about halfway through it. Hermione had given his glasses back to him repaired right before coming into the Great Hall, so now, mercifully, he could see.

And he saw very clearly that Ron got up the very second they had walked in, leaving his breakfast nearly untouched, and stalked off without talking to them, and very openly avoiding him.

Harry found himself staring at the Great Hall entrance.

"Hermione, I'm not hungry, you go ahead," he told her, his eyes still glued to the thick doors. Not even waiting for her response, he took off in much the same manner the redhead had done.

"Ron!" He called out to his friend, who was only a few paces ahead of him, and, therefore had to have heard him.

But no answer came.

"RON!" He called out again, louder this time, with some insistence under his tone.

Even Ron realized that he couldn't ignore a shout that loud. He stopped in his tracks, without bothering to look back at Harry.

"Yeah?" There was no expression in his voice, but his stiff posture told Harry that his friend was upset about something.

"Uhm...well...I was just...uhm..." now what could he say? He had absolutely no idea what he wanted to ask. What could get Ron's attention? "Quidditch!" He exclaimed triumphantly, if there was something that could make Ron feel better about anything, it was

Quidditch. "Want to go practice with me in The Garden?" He asked hopefully.

Ron still didn't turn toward him. "No," he answered with the same flat voice from earlier, "didn't sleep last night," and with that took off in one of the many hallways, leaving a baffled Harry behind.

Something was wrong if he didn't even want to practice, and persuing him would only make him more upset. But what could have possibly made his friend so cold all of a sudden. As far as Harry knew, Ron was having a rather happy period. He was Captain of the team, his grades were all very good (thanks to Hermione), he was having a blast coming up with things to put in the time capsule, and now, they had a secluded field in which they could practice every waking moment that wouldn't be occupied by class.

To top it off, his relationship with Hermione was better than ever.

Actually, Harry thought bitterly, his life is perfect right now.

Ron's life was what Harry wanted. Not because of Quidditch or grades, but because, instead of having insane eleven year olds chasing him all over the grounds, Ron had Hermione.

He was so absorbed in his thoughts, staring at the spot in the hall that Ron had just vacated, that he registered too late the soft footsteps that made their way up to him. When a soft hand touched his shoulder, Harry nearly jerked out of his skin.

He quickly spun around to see Hermione there, one hand outstretched toward him, and a delicious smelling bundle wrapped in a napkin in the other.

She jumped back too at his reaction. "I—I'm sorry...I didn't mean to startle you," she stuttered quietly. She wasn't used to Harry being this jumpy toward her. Ever since fourth year, he'd been really uncomfortable when people touched him, but, with her he'd never minded. She always liked to think that somehow her touch soothed him. Obviously it doesn't, she thought bitterly at his overtly frightened and disgusted reaction.

Harry could see that he'd upset her.

Oh, bloody hell! He didn't want this. Ron was avoiding him, and now, he was doing a fantastic job at involuntarily pushing away everyone that was close to him. What a wonderful day this prospected to be.

"No," Harry spoke frantically and nervously. Hermione had stepped away from him, and he hated that. "No, I just...didn't hear you coming," he tried reassuring her. It didn't seem to work. "I was just thinking a lot, and I didn't expect it. That's all," he tried again. Groaning inwardly, he took a step toward her, placed his hand on her shoulder the same way she had to him, and tried again. "I just wasn't expecting it, Hermione, really," and giving her his toothy grin, he added, "so long as it's you, you can startle me everytime you feel like it...but...just give me a little warning first."

That got a laugh out of her.

"If I were to give you a warning, it wouldn't startle you, now, would it?" She asked impishly.

He grinned. "No, I guess not."

For a second, they both stood there wearing their goofy smirks, simply glad to be in front of each other. But then, Hermione had to ask. "Harry, what was wrong with Ron, did you two fight?" She asked as her eyebrows knit.

Great, her thoughts are always on Ron, his mind told him bitterly. He didn't answer her, and it seemed like she could read the self righteous loathing on his face at the moment, for she didn't press him right there in the hall. After all, that wasn't really the place for heart to hearts.

"Uhm...I took some food for us from the table, want to have breakfast with me outside?" She asked, changing conversation, and beginning to walk toward the exit to the courtyard. It was so much like her to try and put him at ease, that his foul thoughts had to melt away to give way to his genuine smile. He could be happy with this. He could be

happy with just being her friend. No matter how much he wanted them to be more, he knew that he couldn't live without her caring, and if having more meant losing her, well, he'd settle for this.

And Ron was good.

If it had been anyone else, he would have fought for her, tried to get her to change her mind, but Ron was good, and he would make her happy.

So he agreed to breaking his fast in the courtyard with her, even though he knew that she would only try to find out what was wrong with Ron.

As much as he wished for more, he would be happy with this.

And besides, he thought again, she deserves so much better than me, and Ron's better. Much better.

o*o

ron hadn't made it much further, when he heard Hermione's voice mixing with Harry's, so he eavesdropped again. Harry would have felt bad about it, but he'd grown up in a family of seven, tormented by Fred and George, so, to him, it was completely natural. It was always good to have an edge over the enemy.

He didn't know exactly when, over the night, Harry had become 'the enemy'. He just had. And as unfair as that was toward the green eyed boy, he couldn't help himself.

Harry had it all.

The fame, the fortune, youngest Quidditch player in a century, people adored him, and he didn't even try. He managed all of it by simply existing.

Of course, Ron had always loved him, despite the fact that his perfection always did put a real strain on his self confidence, but he always managed that. Well...maybe not in fourth, but since, he'd

always ignored the nagging jealousy that would bite him from time to time.

But now, Ron realized, he had Hermione, too.

Hermione had been his friend just as long as Harry's. Well, ok, so maybe in the beginning he'd thought she was a stuck up know-it-all, and if it hadn't been for Harry, he and Hermione might have never spoken to each other without malice...and maybe if it weren't for Harry, Hermione might not have survived the whole troll in the bathroom incident, but still, he'd been Hermione's friend for a very long time.

In the first years, their friendship had seemed like three equal parts of a triangle, but he'd begun to realize that things might have been different in third, when he'd been told of what had happened to the two as they had saved Sirius Black without him. Then he'd felt left out. He'd felt like Harry and Hermione had gotten closer, and he had found himself distanced without even knowing it. He felt like they could have done perfectly without him.

And in forth it had been worse.

When he hadn't spoken to Harry until the first trial had been over, while, in the meantime, Hermione had gone back and forth between the two, trying to sew back together their bond. And she'd only done it for Harry, because at the time, the only one that had been nice to him was her. She'd wanted him to have a companion.

And he knew very well that the only reason he'd been placed in the lake for Harry was because Hermione was there for Krum. If it hadn't been for that, he would have stood on the sidelines, waiting for Harry to emerge with their bookworm friend in his arms.

Now, he felt as though he was totally useless, and he hated it.

And, most of all, he hated what Harry had with Hermione, because he could never have that.

"It's not nice to listen in on other people's conversations, you know," a sweet feminine voice called out from behind him, startling him out of his thoughts, and making him turn around in a way that made him seem like the thief that had been caught with his hands in the safe.

"Krista," he called out breathlessly when recognizing the pale, blond beauty in front of him. "Why aren't you at breakfast?" He asked trying to get her mind off the fact that she'd just caught him listening in on his 'friends' conversation.

Krista Perril was a lovely girl from Ravenclaw, not very tall, only around 1,65cm, with soft baby blue eyes, long, straight blond hair, and full peach colored lips that always seemed to be hinting at a smile. He'd met her the year before after a game against Ravenclaw. He'd been in the hospital wing, occupying the bed next to that of her boyfriend (that had gotten him into that bed in the first place), and had apologized on behalf of the violent boy. Since then, they'd spoken to each other off and on, and they'd come to something somewhat resembling friendship.

He'd remembered hearing that she'd broken up with Seth, her Quidditch playing boyfriend, shortly after that game.

And, of course, he'd only paid attention to that bit of gossip simply because such a nice girl deserved someone better. Nothing more.

"Don't try to change the subject Mr. Weasley," she said, walking up to him, looking at him from down her nose, and managing to look quite imposing despite the fact that she was a good 35cm difference between the two. "If Harry and Hermione's friendship bothers you so much, then you should talk to them, instead of avoiding them, and clear everything with them. Especially Harry, you shouldn't be mad at him for something petty, and don't look at me like that, I know you well enough to be aware that your sudden animosity toward him is due to something very petty, probably regarding Hermione. His friendship really means a lot to him," she finished quietly, pointing a finger at his chest.

He felt the blood boiling in his veins. How dare she? "And how would you know?" He asked, standing as tall as he could, slightly bending

over to try and intimidate her. How dare she know exactly how he felt?

Her eyes snapped heatedly at him. She was angry, he could tell, and the constant smile that usually played on her lips seemed to melt away in a matter of seconds. "I happen to know because I've been watching since you all started here at Hogwarts. And, upsetting as it may be to you that those two might actually care about each other, they are your friends. I don't think you noticed how lonely Harry felt when you left him completely alone in forth. Yes, he cares for Hermione, even I've noticed that, although I don't think anyone else has, but he also needs you, so I'd advise you, my dear Mr. Weasley, that you think back for a little while of the last few years, and figure out which, of the three of you, has been the truly selfish one in your relationship, because even if this bit of information might have conflicting effects on you, the reason why the two of them are still only friends, is because of you!" She spat out in the end, jabbing her finger into his chest making him stumble backwards, and, without paying any heed to the, very similar to a goldfish, expression that he was wearing, turned on her heels and walked back toward the Great Hall.

What? He thought to himself as he stood the way she'd left him, with his mouth gaping open, his eyes popping out in surprise, and his finger lifted in midair as if to ask a question. What had just gone on? How could she know all those things? How could she know that Harry and Hermione had feelings for each other? Nobody but him had noticed, and how could she know about their very thorough avoiding of each other in forth? Okay, maybe he'd been the one avoiding, but that was beside the point. And how could she say that he'd been selfish in their friendship?

Harry had been the one that had dragged him into countless amounts of dangerous adventures, making him risk his life for his personal fight against You-Know-Who! He'd never asked him if he actually wanted to come or not! ...Well...maybe once or twice he did ask...and maybe in a couple of occasions he'd even used them to show off, but even that was besides the point.

Ron had never been selfish in their friendship, and his friends secret relationship with each other was as selfish as anything could come.

Well...they didn't actually have a secret relationship, but they might as well. He pushed the little voice in the back of his mind as far away as he could when he realized that it was telling him, like Krista had, that they weren't having that relationship simply because of him. Of course they weren't having it because of him, they felt guilty!

That was truly selfish! Wasn't it?

No, he hadn't been selfish at all. Hadn't he?

Oh, how he hated Krista at the moment. It had been so simple to hate his friends before she came and put those useless doubts in his mind. She shouldn't have said those things, and, most of all, she shouldn't have known those things. He'd always felt that their almost friendship was safe, because they could be civil to each other and enjoy each others company without many complications, because, after all, they weren't all that good of friends.

But were they? How could she know him like that? No one knew him that well besides...well, Harry.

God, how he hated her at the moment. And most of all he hated the fact that she knew him so well, and, over her, he didn't hold any advantage at all, because, in truth, he'd never bothered to find out anything about her.

He hated this.

o*o

Harry was worried.

Ron hadn't come to lunch, and nobody had seen him since he flew off at breakfast. He hadn't been in his room, or flying over the Gryffindor Memory Garden, or goofing off with his friends, or anywhere else where he would usually be. In a desperate attempt, Harry and Hermione had even tried to find him in the library.

That truly showed how desperate they were because they both knew that Ron would never go in the library unless dragged there by force with the excuse of an impending important exam, and, since they didn't have any of those coming up, and they hadn't even started classes yet...well, it really was a desperate attempt.

So now they were heading off to the Great Hall for dinner, both wearing deep furrows between their eyebrows in concern for the red head that had been acting strange since the beginning of the day.

But, apparantly, they had worried for nothing.

There he was, Ronald Weasley, sitting in his usual spot, with two empty seats next to him (left for the two of them) as always, eating like the pig Hermione said he was, as always, talking with his mouth full, as always, and splattering his food as he spoke all over poor Colin, as always.

Everything seemed to be normal.

Of course, Harry and Hermione had often been subjected to Ron's foul moods, so they knew that something was wrong when he pulled himself so quickly out of one. After all, they usually lasted no less then three weeks at a time, and this was...well...scary.

They exchanged a worried glance and, both raising an eyebrow at each other, made to walk over.

They saw Ron look their way, so they knew he had seen them, but this time, he didn't make any move to leave. They both let a releaved breath that they hadn't realized they'd been holding, and made their way next to him, one on each side of him.

They said their usual greeting to him, and he answered in kind, spitting food all over them as usual.

"Okay, this is freaky," Hermione mumbled. Harry nodded his head, and Ron looked between the two of them confused for a second.

"watafyooofawfinfafout?" He asked with his mouth full of four biscuits.

But Hermione was used to this and, translating in her mind that he'd asked what they were talking about answered exasperated, "I mean your good mood, Ron. This morning you looked like you hated Harry and I worse than...Malfoy even, and now, you're only...you again," she said waving her hands as though the question had been stupid and the answer obvious, which, actually, it was.

Ron, for once, actually swallowed his food before answering. With a shrug he said, "Well, now I'm mad at someone else," and continued to eat as nothing was, but neither of them missed the dagger filled glare that he sent at the Ravenclaw table, where a pretty blond was returning his look full fledged.

Hermione raised an eyebrow. "Krista Perril?" She asked indignantly. "Why exactly would you be mad at her? She's a lovely person! And besides, why were you mad at us in the first place? Last I recall, we were all the big happy family we were yesterday," she asked, a slight screech of disbelieving anger in her voice.

"Yeah, well, this morning I didn't think we were that happy of a family, and I didn't feel like talking to you! If you can't figure out why, that's your problem!" He exclaimed, upset again, this time at her rather than at Harry. How could she not understand what she had done? And how dare Krista say that his reason to be upset was petty? And with that he turned to glare daggers at the blond, his anger toward Hermione completely forgotten. "I hate her!" He hissed.

Hermione exchanged another worried glance with Harry. "Listen, Ron," she began, and her tone made Ron turn to look at her. "We're starting to get really worried here," she continued. "Tell us what's bothering you," she pleaded. Seeing Ron like this scared her. She'd always thought of him as the irresponsible brother that had to be protected, and, since she was looking intently at him, she didn't notice Harry flinch at the soft, caring voice that she'd been using.

However, when the voice of Lavender and Parvati were heard saying "Aww..." in a dreamy sigh, Hermione turned her eyes from Ron's onto them, along with Ron, who was just as confused as she.

Harry just stared at his plate, picking at his food.

"'Aww' what?" They asked in unison.

"You guys are so cute together," Lavender said, still using the annoying drawl that had been used for the 'aww'. Ron's eyes lit up, yet Hermione turned her face into a mask that seemed to scream "Yeah, right!"

"Yeah, but your hair colors clash," Parvati said, a little more seriously than her counterpart. Ron's happy grin was instantly smothered, and Hermione seemed to be asking herself what the two had been smoking locked up in that Divination tower all day long. "But you're still real cute together," Parvati continued, and, for some reason, the whole Gryffindor table seemed to have heard.

"What? You're a couple?"

"Ron, you sly dog!"

"How'd you get such a good catch Hermione?"

"I want to be invited to the wedding!"

"Wedding? When are you getting married?"

"You're getting married? Is Harry going to be best man?"

At the last Harry's head made a loud 'thunk' sound as it loudly, and rather painfully, hit the surface of the wood. Hermione's eyes bugged as she feared like she'd never feared before, that Harry might actually believe that she was getting married to Ron. Well, he won't believe that, but what if he thinks that I like Ron? Oh, no! She had to do something. So she began to deny. Vehemently. Like she'd never denied anything in her entire life. "No, we're not together. There's no

way we'd ever get married, we're just friends, nothing more! We've never liked each other that way!" And on and on like that.

"Yes, but why are you two always touching each other?" She didn't even know who was confronting her. Her head was swimming, and it felt like every Gryffindor in school was in front of her questioning her all at once.

"Well, because we're friends, and we're comfortable with each other," that was the truth, and they should believe it, but she knew very well that those scoop hungry mad teenagers wouldn't.

"Then why don't you touch Harry like that?" Who dare ask that?

"Because they're different!" And they were! When Harry touched her it was special. Like the night before, when all she did was scratch his scalp, and all he did was rest his head against her knee (well, that wasn't all he did, she reminded herself as she thought of the slow lingering kiss he'd pressed to her forehead). Yes, Harry's touches were special, they weren't like the completely casual and meaningless slaps, and hugs, and such that she shared with Ron. Those were...brotherly. But she couldn't very well tell that to the whole of Gryffindor now could she? Not when Harry would be two seats over listening, ready to bolt when she would admit that his touches were the most special things that she would ever experience.

"Yes, they're different, because you love Ron," someone else put in with a very annoying leer. She wanted to slap that leer away...if only her head stopped swimming long enough to figure out who'd said it.

"Oh, please!" She exclaimed indignantly. But they didn't give up, and she'd found herself drowning in the accusations (for that's what they felt like, she felt like she was being accused of not loving Harry, of now showing that she loved Harry, and, to the last, she had to admit she was guilty. For the duration of the dinner, she was unable to look at Harry, no matter how much she wanted to. She wanted to see him, know that he didn't believe what their so called friends were insisting was the the truth, make sure that he believed her.

But she knew he wouldn't. Not because he didn't trust her, but because he knew her. He knew that whenever she'd liked a boy, she'd never openly admitted it, or even showed it. Krum was just an example of that. She'd kept completely secret that she would be going to the Yule Ball with him, and she'd never breathed more than two words on their relationship to either of her friends. And it had been that way with every boy that had followed.

And, of course, there was the fact that Harry had the lowest self-esteem of all of Hogwarts. He was, by far, the most wonderful person that had walked those grounds, he'd saved the Wizarding (and probably the Muggle) World time and time again, helped his friends through thick and thin, risked his life for their own countless times, but he still believed himself to be of little importance to anything. She knew very well that this was the reason for which their—Ron and Hermione's—friendships meant so much to him.

They made him feel real, and loved, and worthy of existing. Ron was poor, and she was a Muggle born. To the higher born, they were as low as people could come, but to Harry, they were real. They weren't around him for his fame, or for his scar, or for his money, but simply for the fact that he was Harry. Sweet, lovable, wonderful, selfless Harry.

The Harry she loved.

If only she could tell him that, know that she was good enough for him, maybe now she wouldn't be in such trouble, but, as life was, she couldn't tell him, because she knew that he would turn her down. And he had every right to. After all, she was definitely not worth what he was. He was an emerald, pure, dark, and clear. She was nothing but a dark pebble.

A pebble could never belong with an emerald.

Even in all her dark thoughts, she couldn't help but notice that in the whole exchange, Ron looked triumphantly over in Krista Perril's direction, while the girl answered him with looks that would have petrified a ghost (and done far worse to who was living). Ron seemed to be reveling in them.

What Harry might have looked like at that moment, she would never know, for she wasn't worthy of looking at him.

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Harry sat quietly in front of the lit fireplace again, just as he had the night before, slumped over, clutching the diary quietly in his hand, staring at the flames licking the bricks of the hearth, seeing them, but not noticing them at all. The only difference was that tonight, he was sitting on the corner of the overstuffed couch, his eyes even duller than they had been the previous evening.

He'd been sitting like that for hours now, still waiting for Hermione to come back from her round of the castle, wallowing in self pity, and nothing had been able to pull him out of it. Not the sight of the Stalker Squad completely covered in obscene squiggles (obviously Ciccibello's handywork) along with Kevin, or their frightened screeches as they ran off complaining about having been seen like that by the 'Boy who lived'. Not the scene played by Neville as he tried to turn a pillow into a bunny with the help of Ciccibello and only managed to get a human sized saber toothed rabbit that had begun to chase him around the castle, closely followed by a hysterical giggling Ciccibello. Not even the horrified screams of the first year victims yelling that the paint had been charmed and wouldn't come off, had been able to snap him out of his thoughts, or even managed to get him to look away from the flames in the hearth.

The only thing that his mind kept on playing over and over for him, had been the scene at dinner. When Lavender and Parvati had first 'awwed' at his two best friends, he'd only stared at the plate, telling himself that he knew all along that they were in love. Well, when someone had asked if he was going to be best man at their wedding, Harry had slammed his head against the hard wooden surface of the table to justify the stinging behind his eyes. Yes, he'd always thought of the possibility. That, of course, didn't change the fact that, until someone had vocalized the fact out loud, it could always have been his own impression, and he could always hope that maybe he was wrong.

That had killed even his hoping.

As he shut his eyes he pictured himself looking on from the sidelines as his best friends looked disgustingly happily at each other professing eternal love at their own wedding while he handed them the rings with shaking fingers and a shattered heart. He knew it would one day come to that, but, until nobody said anything, it could be ignored. Now, he didn't even have that.

Ron had looked so disgustingly happy when they'd said he looked cute with her!

And Hermione...well, her persistent denial of any kind of relationship with Ron, at first, had given him the most inappropriate glimmer of hope. Maybe she didn't love him! Maybe she really did just think of him as a friend, as she'd vehemently insisted the whole night. Maybe...maybe...maybe she loved him.

Oh, but who was he trying to fool?! She'd sounded just like he had when Krum had confronted him about having any feeling toward Hermione before the second trial. He'd denied, said she was just a friend, said he was interested in someone else...and he was convinced he was. But his heart had almost leapt out of its cage when Krum had said that she spoke constantly of him. He'd convinced himself that he liked Cho Chang, and had insisted on thinking that all he felt toward Hermione had been nothing but friendship, that, to him, she was nothing but a kindred spirit. But then he'd understood that he'd just been avoiding the truth.

And that night, Hermione had sounded just like him.

She'd been denying the truth, or, simply, she hadn't figured it out yet.

That was most likely it.

But now that someone had helped her realize it (mainly the entire Gryffindor population for which, at the moment, he nursed the grandest sort of loathing), it would only be a matter of time before she came to realize it too. And then it would be wedding bells, and best man, and wedding rings, and shattered heart for Harry.

Well, he just needed to get used to the idea. Then, he would be able to put up the happy front until they went off on their honeymoon. Oh, god, honeymoon! Well, during those weeks in which they would be gone, he could lock himself up somewhere isolated and try to tape the shards of his heart back together with Spell-o-tape. He was sure he wouldn't manage much, but it would give him time to get used to the idea. And, if he prepared himself for it now, well, then, it probably wouldn't hurt as much when they would make the announcement.

And then, the portrait hole opened and let in the object of his turmoils and affections. Hermione Granger.

"Oh, good, you're still here," she called out cheerfully, but even to her own ears it sounded forced. In all honesty, she was worried. What if he believed what the other Gryffindors had said at dinner? And, worse yet, what if he didn't care? But...he was there! He'd waited for her all this time! That had to mean something! No stupid, she chided herself, he's just been waiting for you so you could read the diary to him! Yet, she was truly glad that he'd waited so late into the night for her return, and she couldn't help but nourish a little hope that he might have been waiting for her and not her voice.

Her smile, though, faltered under his intense scrutiny. They hadn't looked directly at each other since she'd asked Ron if he was alright, and now, well, he seemed upset with her. He seemed to be screaming at her that she shouldn't have kept it secret from her. But I didn't! She screamed in her mind.

"Harry," she whispered his name, as she felt her knees go weak from the accusation that she found in the emerald pools that were his eyes. Please, don't look at me like that!

He stared wordlessly for another second, then sighed and took his eyes away from her and looked at the diary. It hadn't been like he thought. She was aware that she loved Ron, she just wasn't ready to admit it, and this, her denial and the delay that she was putting to what should be between her and Ron, would kill him. The sooner they get together, the better. And with that thought in mind, he spoke, his

eyes still on the red leather binding of his mother's diary. "Will Ron be alright with this?"

That wasn't what she'd been expecting. "What?" All her confusion transpired through that one word.

"..." He stared at her for another moment, and then, "I wish you would have told me," the words were a whisper, but the steel edge that was behind them felt like a knife in the gut.

"What?" This time her voice cracked under the emotion. Oh, Harry, please don't believe what they said, she pleaded inwardly.

"That you're with Ron," he stated as clearly as he could, trying to hide every bit of pain that was behind the words that he'd spoken.

Oh, god! He believed them! She screamed in her mind, angry at the Gryffindors for having said it, angry at Harry for having believed it, and angry at herself for not being able to tell him the truth because of her fear of rejection. "I...I'm not, Harry," she finally managed to phrase. Please, believe ME! "They were just kidding at dinner, you know that," she tried to reassure with a weak smile, but they both knew that the whole of Gryffindor was convinced of the upcoming marriage between herself and Ron Weasley.

"Maybe," he allowed her that at least, "but you still love him." It was a statement, not a question, and it seemed to leave no room for buts.

And yet, she had to try and make him believe her. "Not like that, Harry," she whispered, and her eyes were pleading with his, screaming her innocence (for it seemed a crime to her that he was accusing her of loving anyone but him), and for a second he seemed to believe her.

But then he said, "It's ok, you don't have to lie with me." Now, that hurt!

"I'm not," she pleaded again.

But this time, he didn't even bother doubting it. What was the point? It would only make it more painful when she'd come out with it. He only mumbled a not very convincing, "Sure."

Hermione knew that at this point arguing would be a lost cause. Unless she told him the truth, the whole truth, he would never believe her. And telling him the truth didn't seem appealing to her. Sighing in a resigned manner, she walked over to the couch and sat next to him, not close, but close enough for their shoulders to touch. Wordlessly, he handed her the diary, and, deflated as she was, once she began to read the words aloud, she began to forget her own troubles, and got lost in what was the life of one Lily Evans. Turns out that her life had been interesting (much like their own had) from the very first day. At Hogwarts, of course.

September 1,

Today, I started my journey as a witch. And what a journey this is promising to be! Just King's Cross was an adventure! Once we got there we started asking around for track 9 and $\frac{3}{4}$ (that was what was written on the ticket that was in the letter!), and, after having been called pranksters, idiots, and all around insane we were almost about to give up. And then, dad leaned against the inside of one of the arches of the train station to rest a little, and...passed right through it! He disappeared into it! Petunia was screaming her head off. Again.

Then, off to the side, I heard a girl about my age say, "Muggles", like if it was something bad. I had already heard that word in the Leaky Cauldron.

"What does that mean?" I asked her. Nobody had told me yet. She looked at me (she was sizing me up, I could tell), and looked at my cart, with the cauldrons, books, Rajah (agitated in her cage), and then at the wand that was sticking out of my pocket.

"You're going to Hogwarts, too, right?" She asked. When I nodded she smiled. I started to like her right away. "Muggle means someone who's not magic," she explained. "And don't worry about your dad," she reassured me. "He's already on track 9 and $\frac{3}{4}$."

It took me a second to understand what she meant.

"The track is on the other side?!" This...was rather insane. But...she nodded. The track was REALLY on the other side of the bricks! Petunia looked ready to faint. I looked toward mom. She's always been the kind to believe that nobody's truly bad, and therefore, didn't believe that this girl was pulling our legs. I didn't think she was either, she seemed really nice. So mom walked up to the wall and lifted her hand as if to touch it.

"My parents told me that the first time is easier if we run through," she explained, and I noticed she was nervous. It must have been her first time, too.

Mom did as she was told. She ran through and ended up on the other side leaving the spot empty. Knowing that if I went before Petunia, she would have never budged from her spot, I pulled her in front of the bricks (where she started to shake) and pushed her through. I know it's mean to say this, but...it was kind of funny hearing her scream the way she did.

The girl next to me looked at me as if to say: "What's wrong with her?" But she was nice enough not to ask.

She went before me, pushing her cart in front of her. I gave her a few seconds, not knowing if I was going to end up slamming into her if I went to soon, and then followed.

I said goodbye to mom and dad quickly since the train was about to leave already, and I even hugged Petunia. Even though we don't get along at all, she's still my sister, and I won't see her until Christmas break comes around. I gave my things over to someone who helped me store it away, and followed the girl up into one of the empty cabins.

Then I stuck my head out of the window for the last goodbyes. Actually, I did it more to really look at the track than anything else (since we'd been in such a hurry, I didn't get a very good look at it). I like that place. It's just like Diagon Alley, full of people with weird clothes, a few of them see through (in 'Hogwarts: A History' I read

that there are ghosts, so I'm guessing they were like that), and it smelt of magic everywhere. Well, I don't know if magic has a smell, but to me it feels like it.

Anyway, I became friends with my fellow witch (whose name is Jenna Hannisons, by the way) almost on the spot, and we started talking about everything. Turns out her parents had been at Hogwarts, too, and they'd made her go on her own the first time because they thought it was better that way. I could sense from her that she had been scared, but she was brave, and she hid it well. Besides, as scared as we were, we were both almost too excited to notice. And the fact that we'd found a good friend right away only made it better.

I felt so comfortable with her that I even told her about Petunia, and I generally don't do that. I told her that my sister was scared of me because of my powers, and that she hated anything that WASN'T normal (which, of course, I personified), and that my detachment from her was a form of self defence. My sister and I were, and are, far too capable of hurting each other.

Jenna doesn't have brothers and sisters, so she told me that she couldn't really understand what it feels like, but she said that being an only child with working parents made her feel lonely a lot. But I don't think either one of us is going to feel lonely at Hogwarts, and I told her as much. I actually told her of my premonitions, too. I still can't believe I did that.

I never told anyone but my parents in my whole life, and, not even half an hour after I met her, I told her. But I knew I could trust her. She was surprised, but not disgusted. She said that not many people, especially among the Muggle born (that's what she said I was), had this ability. She also told me that I'm probably strong in them, because I'm so young, and I can already be sure of so much. She said I shouldn't tell too many people, because it could be used against me, and she's right. I know that already.

Anyway, while we were talking about our parents jobs two boys came in our cabin. They were both good looking, good natured, and fun spirited (well, that's what my instinct said). One had longish black hair, pale skin, and dark eyes, the other, slightly thin, and smaller, had

REALLY messy black hair, glasses, and brown eyes. They both had the cheekiest smiles I've ever seen.

They are going to be fun to be around, I'm sure.

"Hello," the one with the glasses said, "you haven't by any chance see an insanely rude baby doll by the name of Cicciobello flying around, have you?" The question sounded insane, and Jenna thought they were making fun of her, but I knew they were serious.

"I don't know what a Cicciobello looks like, but we haven't seen any flying dolls, sorry," I told them. The boy with the black hair turned toward the outside of the cabin and started yelling: "Ciccio! Come back to us!" He seemed desperate.

"Don't mind him, he just really likes that doll," the boy with the glasses said. It seemed rather strange that a ten year old boy should be so attached to a DOLL, but then again, I'm not all that familiar with the magical world. Maybe here it's normal. However, the look on Jenna's face didn't seem to agree.

Then I saw someone else coming up to us, holding what looked like a baby blue blanket, all struggling and shaking in his hands, keeping it as far away from his person as he could. "Is this what you're looking for?" He asked, and then I noticed that he had a big brown stain on his shirt that looked like earth's biggest cow had left its droppings there. I'd guessed that the cow must have been that crazy blanket he was holding.

Then the guy that had been calling out 'Ciccio!' threw his arms wide and called, again, "Ciccio!"

And the blanket called, "Papi!" and threw itself at him.

This...was definitely very strange.

Anyway, it turns out that the two boys that had come into the cabin (James Potter, the one with the glasses, and Sirius Black—what kind of a name is 'Sirius'—the doll lover) were the owners of the doll (it turns out that it wasn't a blanket, but a doll, a pretty one too that

looks just like a human, six-month old baby). Actually, the owner of the doll was James's sister, who'd gotten it from Muggle Italy during their summer vacation, and the boys had decided to experiment some spells on it once they found out they were going to Hogwarts. Well, their experimenting had been the birth of Cicciobello.

James had said that his sister had given it to him to bring to Hogwarts so that he would have something of hers while he was away, but I figured that the kid only gave it to him to get rid of it.

This became a certainty when Cicciobello took a dump on Jenna, the other boy (who was blond, pale, slight sickly looking and went by the name of Remus Lupin), and myself. Remus had been dumped on twice since he got on the train, and I don't think he likes the doll much.

Thankfully, after having brought the doll to life, James and Sirius had learned several good spells that got rid of any trace of the dumping we received (and it's a good thing they did, or I would have gotten very mad at them).

The boys sat with us throughout the ride, and we hit it off quite well. Actually, by the time the train reached its destination, Cicciobello became quite attached to the rest of us and promised not to dump on us anymore.

For some reason, I think everyone in school will hate us for this.

Anyhow, the school...is a CASTLE! It's HUGE! It's got a lake (with a GIANT SQUID in it!), a forest (that the headmaster said was forbidden), and MOVING STAIRS! Of course, I read about this already (and of the talking paintings, and the ghosts, and the magic ceiling of the Great Hall that's been enchanted to look like a starry sky), but seeing it with my own eyes was something else.

Of course, I already knew all this from reading 'Hogwarts: A History' (and, to tell the truth, I actually played a bit the know-it-all by telling others about things I knew), but, when I read the book, I thought most of it was fiction! And, instead, it was ALL real!

I'm already in love with this place.

First, McGonagall, whose vice-principal and one of the teacher (Tranfiguration, they said...I think I'll find out what that is eventually), told us that we were all to sit on the stool and put a REALLY old, kind of gross looking hat on our heads and IT would call out the house that we would be in. Yes, because the school has four houses that the students get put into. Gryffindor, who is supposedly very brave, Ravenclaw, smart, Hufflepuff, loyal, and Slytherin, ambitious...actually to me it sounds more evil than anything (and looking at their table I was pretty sure of it). I really hope I don't get stuck there.

I think I almost had a stroke when McGonagall read my name off the list. Sirius had been already sorted into Gryffindor, and I was hoping I would end there, too. I felt really warm when I looked at that table. When the hat was on my head it felt...weird. For one thing...it moved, while ON TOP of my head! And it whispered strange things in my ear. "Ah, a seer!" It would say. "How many qualities I see here, yes. Courage, strength, loyalty. Very good, a sharp mind, yes, ah...yes," and with that it went quiet.

I thought my heart was going to thunder out of its cage. And then...

"GRYFFINDOR!"

Oh, god, yes, thank you!

And I ran over to the table that I had wanted to be in since the beginning.

Jenna, Remus, and James, also were sorted into Gryffindor. I think my stay here will be even more enjoyable thanks to them. Right after James, another boy, Peter Pettigrew, was sorted into Gryffindor as well, he was shy, and quiet, and he idolized both James and Sirius (Jenna had told me that not only do they both come from very important wizarding families, but they're also very famous pranksters, and that's saying a lot considering that they're only eleven). Before the feast (and I DO mean FEAST!) was over, he was already part of the group.

The only thing that worried me though, was another boy, Severus Snape, pale with greasy looking black hair, that got sorted into Slytherin. I don't know what it is. Even from my seat I could feel the indecision in the sorting hat, and I'm afraid it made a terrible mistake. That boy's future is very unstable, he could turn toward the light the same way he could turn to the shadows, and I really do feel that Slytherin was not the right choice for him.

But as it is, I really can't do anything about that.

Now, I'm sitting in my dorm room (that I share with Jenna, and I'm really glad of it, and two other girls, Arabella Figg, and Mandella Williams), and I really like it in here. We all have our very own four poster bed, and it's all decorated with the Gryffindor colors (gold and red), like the common room (which is going to become my favorite part of the Gryffindor tower).

Lessons don't start for a few days, so I have all the time in the world to explore this and report everything calmly, and I honestly can't wait.

Still, that Severus Snape worries me.

Goodnight

Lily

Hermione knew that she should have gone on to the next page, but decided against it. Instead, she turned to Harry, and told him, "Your mother must have been a very powerful witch, you know that Harry?"

He looked surprised for a second. He hadn't expected her to comment on anything until they were further into his mother's life. "What do you mean?"

"Well," she began, "for one thing, there are her premonitions. I think she's a seer, even the sorting hat said something like that," she explained.

"I thought you didn't believe in seers," he said confused.

"I don't believe in Trelawny being a seer," she corrected. "I can't deny that what your mother felt and saw in her dreams was real. I mean, even at this point, like what she said about Snape, it's already too much proof for me to deny," she replied in her, always, logical tone. Harry nodded in understanding. "Besides, it takes a great deal of power to control this diary, and she could do it perfectly already from the first time she used it at the age of ten," she added.

"What do you mean? What's so special about this diary?" and as he asked those questions he scooted closer to her so that their whole sides were molded together and he was leaning over the book as though trying to figure out its secrets with a glance. He ignored the warmth that seeped through where their bodies met, and scolded himself, telling his mind that she loved someone else.

Calm down! Hermione yelled at her heart, that was beating far too fast. Don't get your hopes up! It took her a second, but she was sure that her voice wouldn't crack and so, flipping to the page where Lily had written her name pointed out to him. "See this seal?" She pointed to a celtic looking design inside a red perfect circle (with the diameter of about 2cm) that he'd manage to perfectly ignore until that moment. He nodded. "Well, to write in this kind of diary," she continued, "you don't write out every word like we do for our assignments or letters and such. You place your quill here, and...just think of what you want to put in the diary. Your thoughts and feelings automatically write themselves out," she explained.

"To be able to control it the way Lily did, you have to have absolute certainty in your feelings of everything that you're thinking about, and a clarity in your thought that most ten year olds just don't have," at Harry's knit eyebrows she clarified this concept more. "You have to think exclusively of what you want to write about or the sentences are jumbled. For example, you can't write about the difficulty you have with a potion if, at the same time, your worried about turning in your Transfiguration homework. The sentence wouldn't make sense," she exclaimed.

"I get it," Harry reassured, allowing her to go on.

"You see, Harry, your mom didn't only keep her train of thought like no ten year old could, but she also managed to write her thoughts in perfectly structured english sentences! That takes a lot of control! I don't know, maybe it's her seer ability, but...she has amazing control. And confidence! Without that, the quill hardly moves at all!" She finished.

Harry nodded again. "Do you have one?" He asked. Hermione always knew about everything, but she seemed to know a particularly hefty amount of information on this particular topic.

Damn him for being so sharp! She cursed to herself. Okay, Hermione, deep breaths... "I do..." she confessed. "But I don't use it."

Harry knit his eyebrows at this. "Why not?"

She simply looked at him. "Because...I'm not ready to face what my heart writes. See, Harry, it's your heart that spells the words out for you, that tells your mind what you want to write about. Even if your mind wanders and it can be hard to control it, it's your heart that leads, and my mind wasn't ready to admit to what the heart kept on trying to write," she told him enigmatically.

"What do you mean?" He was truly confused.

"When I was with Viktor..." should she continue this and tell him? "It wrote about someone else," she finished.

Harry had a feeling he knew who it would write about. "And now?" He asked, knowing full well that it was like turning the knife in the open wound, and, just for safety, spilling salt on it, too. Maybe I have masochistic tendencies, he thought to himself.

Tell him, stupid! She screamed at herself. She opened her mouth to tell him, but only heard herself saying: "It's time to keep reading." No! You stupid git! You had your chance!

But Harry was an understanding fellow. Even too much for his own good. He let the matter drop knowing that she was uncomfortable with it.

And so Hermione didn't try to redeem her possibility, and went on to read the entire month of September.

Ron, who'd been the whole time eavesdropping (he seemed to be trying to get a degree in it) from one of the steps that couldn't be seen from the sofa, didn't feel like listening anymore. He'd heard enough. Quietly, as to not make his presence known, he made his way to his dorm room, and, with a blank expression on his face, tried to fall asleep, to little avail.

He didn't know what to think anymore.

Author's notes: To Erenriel the Elven Canuck: I hope this slightly explains where the Ciccibello came from. It is actually a doll that has been made and sold in Italy for DECADES without changing (my great-aunt even owned one when she was a kid) and it has never changed. I always wondered why they kept on selling the damn things when kids could have just taken their parents' doll, and (through a disturbingly twisting, winding train of thoughts) I came up with the idea of the possessed Ciccibello, which, to my own opinion, is much more fun than the real ones. Anyway, if you liked it, hated it, had any opinion or constructive criticism on it, or just want to plainly flame me, go ahead and email me at or review. Go ahead, I like BBQs.

Thanks

Pearl

Every parent leaves something behind for their child to remember them by. Lily Evans didn't know, when she left her diary behind, that it would help her son into knowing her, and himself...or did she?

Disclaimer: I own nothing but the plot, Cicciobello, and Krista Perril.

Warning: There is a scene in this chapter involving Snape and Cicciobello, but I, honestly, don't like it much, but I don't know what to replace it with. I'd appreciate if you reviewed and told me whether or not the scene should be changed. Does it still go under a PG13 rating? I'm not good with ratings at all. Anyway, this chapter is shorter than the last (but the future ones won't be) so it should be easier to gobble down even with all it's angst and lack of certain romance. Anyway, I hope you enjoy, and, even if you don't I hope you review (or at least try to finish the chapter, for I nearly couldn't, and I'm not happy with it, but it's necessary).

And now: on with the fic!

Harry Potter and the Knowledge of a Mother

Chapter 3: Jealousy

Why? Hermione asked herself as she tossed once again in her large four poster bed, the sheets askew, the pillow beaten to a pulp, her hair a mottled mess, and her eyes puffy from lack of sleep. The question had been repeating itself in her head from the night before, when she'd been reading Lily's diary to Harry. Why didn't I tell him?

When she'd said that her diary wrote of someone else when she'd been with Viktor, she thought she'd seen a flicker of hope in his deep green eyes. And when he'd asked, "Who?"...well, he'd definitely sounded hopeful then. And she'd felt her heart swell. Maybe he did feel some kind of attraction toward her! Maybe he did feel something in return! Maybe, just maybe, he even loved her back! But the words wouldn't budge past her lips. She couldn't tell him that she'd loved him for years.

She knew he needed to hear the words.

Ever since the Triwizard tournament had been over, Harry...well, Harry hadn't been the same. He'd always been modest. Far too modest even. To him, the amazing feats that he'd gone through had been...kind of like homework. Ok, that was putting it very mildly, but, in a way, it was true. They had been chores. Dictated by duty. As though he knew that it was his job to do it, and he did it simply because of that. He never even pondered whether or not he had a choice in the matter. He never seemed to notice that he could have just ignored the things that nobody else seemed to notice.

He knew nobody else would do it, and so he did it because of duty towards his friends, whom he tried to protect, and towards his parents, in respect of their sacrifice for him.

Yes, he'd always been far too modest...but now...now it was different.

He was still modest, and did everything in his power to fight his battle against the dark forces, but...he'd...well, he'd become, insecure.

She'd already seen it the night of the last task, when she'd seen him lie awake in that hospital bed after Dumbledore and minister Fudge had argued. His resolve to win against the Dark Lord had steeled. She could read in his eyes that he had no doubt of winning over him. That wasn't what he was so insecure about.

He was afraid, not of the battle, but of what would be lost because of it. Cedric Diggory had died that night. And Harry held himself responsible. He thought that if he had been selfish (and she knew he couldn't have lived with that), Cedric would not have been involved. He never thought back to remember that Cedric had agreed to it. He'd never thought that, if Cedric had been a little more selfish himself and had gone ahead to get the Cup alone, he would have still died.

He didn't realised that in most of the other ways that the night could have gone the outcome would have been the same.

That insecurity, the one that made him afraid of losing everyone, had slowly begun to eat at him.

She had almost not recognised him at all when he'd come back to his fifth year at Hogwarts, denourished, pale, ashy skinned, with absolutely no light in his eyes. She knew he must have been having nightmares (and still had them very often now) for not only were his eyes shadow cast, they were also dull, and surrounded by the tell tale dark circles of his bottom lids that told of sleep deprivation.

His confidence of everything had, little by little, deteriorated.

He felt unloved, she knew that, even though she and Ron did show him very much their friendly affection.

But friendly affection wasn't enough.

He needed to be held.

She knew very well, that, if she'd told him what she felt—even without returning her feelings—would have brought his spark of confidence back.

But maybe, that was exactly the reason for her silence.

Or maybe it was just selfishness.

She didn't want to tell her feelings without the certainty that they were returned. Yes, that was pure selfishness. She was quite sure that he didn't love her—for who could love a bushy haired, boring bookworm?—and she didn't want his rejection.

Thinking about it he might not have rejected her. Maybe, rejoicing in the fact that someone DID love him—and how she loved him!—he would have taken it, no matter the form, shape, size, and person, so long as he could have it.

And she didn't want that.

She wanted something real.

And if she couldn't have that, she would settle for his friendship, for that was the best thing she had in the world.

But now, the sun was up, she had slept none at all, and she had to get dressed to go to breakfast. After all, today was the first day of actual schooling, and the Gryffindors had Potions first thing. Not a great way to start the day...or the term, for that matter.

Descending the crowded stairways to the Great Hall, the lack of sleep and her depressed state of mind didn't manage to keep her from noticing the utter lack of Gryffindor first year girls among the students. She had to remind herself to thank Ciccibello at least for that sole consolation that tried to give her peace of mind.

As she rounded the corner she felt herself forcefully being pulled into the shadows, and almost let out a shriek of surprise—and fright—but managed to stop herself upon realizing that it was only Ron.

She heaved a sigh of relief.

"Ron, you startled me," she told him, and made to go to the Great Hall, but he pulled her back again, and this time she noticed that he had The Look. The one that told that he was upset. The one that told that he was angry. The one that told that he was about to sprout absolutely absurd reasons for being so.

"Why didn't you tell him?" His voice was sharp steel, his grip far too tight on her arm, his facial features chiseled into a mask of anger. His question, though, was what scared her. She'd been asking herself that all night and managed to keep herself from sleep in the while, but how could Ron know?

"What are you talking about?" She asked, realizing that her voice had taken a sharp edge as well. If Ron had done what she thought he'd done...ooh! He would be in for it.

He didn't answer. At least not directly.

"Come on, Hermione!" He exclaimed. "the both of you are suffering!" Why the sneaky little weasel! He'd been eavesdropping! He could see her anger. He read it in her gritted teeth, in her stiff shoulders, and in the pure loathing that he saw in her eyes. But he also saw her

despair. Her anguish. It was right there, right next to the anger, in her knitted eyebrows, and in the tears that she was trying to hold back. "Why didn't you tell him?" He repeated, this time with a softer tone, almost caring, his grip loosening on her.

His question had been quiet, but her release wasn't. She'd tortured herself all night. The past nights. Of the last few years. And now it burst out of her. In one loud, booming erupting release—like a volcano finally giving into the strength of the lava—she shouted three simple words that took him by surprise. "I'M TOO SCARED!" and she threw herself at him with all the strength in her small body, sobbing the tears that she'd been holding back for too long.

It had been like being hit by a tornado.

That had been his confirmation.

She loved him. Krista had told him so, or at least hinted at it, and he'd accepted it over the night—somewhat—but this! He had no idea that there was this intensity...this longing...this need. And yet she was scared. Of losing his friendship? Of breaking the balance of their trio? Of being rejected? He didn't know.

He didn't even realise that he was holding her now, in the same way he used to hold Ginny when Fred and George had played a dirty trick on her as a child, instinctively touching her hair in a soothing manner. Her sobs racking through his body as well.

They were torturing each other.

He knew Harry believed the other Gryffindors that said he and Hermione loved each other, he'd seen it on his face the night before, and heard it in Harry's voice as he spoke bitter words to Hermione before the fire.

But how could Hermione do this to herself? Didn't she see that Harry loved her? Didn't she see that she was destroying their balance like this? Didn't she see that she could never lose Harry?

And, as though summoned—well, maybe he had been summoned by the sound of her sobs—Harry came around the corner, his face a mask of worry as he looked down at the girl he loved.

"Hermione," he whispered. His voice cracked as he spoke her name. He reached a hand out to her shoulder, but his touch made her sob all the harder.

"You better go, Harry," Ron told him, and watched Harry's mask turn, from one of worry for the girl, to anguish. Ron had conflicting feelings at having caused this. On one side, he felt like the lowest of pond scum, for having denied his friend the chance to comfort Hermione. On the other, he felt invigorated—and he knew he was the lowest of pond scum—for making Harry feel like he would have been of absolutely no use, and would have, instead, hindered the situation with his presence. Ron knew that he only felt that because it was, too him, like being more important than the Boy Who Lived. Yet, he couldn't help but relish in that.

In the midst of her sobs, Hermione still managed to ask a question. "Why did you do that?" Her voice was horse from the strain she had put it through.

"To make him jealous," he answered truthfully. That had been the original intention. And, of course, it had worked.

"Why?" She asked again, but to that, he replied by enveloping her more in his arms and smiling a, rather disarming, smile.

Krista—God! He hated her!—had been right.

He was the selfish one.

o*o

"Five points taken from Gryffindor for Miss Granger and Mr. Weasley's incapability of finding the classroom on time," several collective eye rolls and groans were uttered at this, and, in response, Snape gave them an, even more, intimidating look than earlier. Ron and Hermione, who had walked in together, the young girl still red

faced and sniffing, separated and sat at different available Gryffindor tables. "Our Head Girl should try to set a better example than this Miss Granger," he told her maliciously, but, knowing full well that he gloated in their misery, had been expecting it, and simply acknowledged him with a nod, letting him know that he hadn't fazed her at all.

And it was true.

Snape couldn't harm her when she was already so devastated.

And, of course, this angered him.

As he spoke the next words his knuckles had turned white gripping the edge of his black cloak over his folded arms, and his lips had thinned into a thin stern line of pure loathing. "I expect you believed me mad enough to let you all choose for yourselves your lab partners, but you are wrong." He relished seeing most of the Gryffindors tremble as they stole furtive glances at the Slytherins. "You will all now stand," in a manner that spoke resignation, they did so. "I have prepared a potion that, taken by one of you, will work into your subconscious mind, looking at your faults," this was said at Harry, "and your, few, rights," this at the Slytherins, "and you, yourselves, will call out your partner. Oh, and don't bother smirking for you, yourselves, have absolutely no choice in who you will be paired with," he seemed far too excited at that prospect. If he wasn't careful he might have cracked a smile.

He began reading off names in alphabetical order. Lavender had been paired with Neville, and Millicent Bullstrode had called out Malfoy's name (the last didn't seem too thrilled though), lots of Slytherins with their own kind, as well as Gryffindors, and, to the displeasure of both, several mixed pairings. When Hermione's name had been called, she gave a glance at the remaining students. Since her last name started with G, she still had a lot of good shots, and most of the truly horrible ones had been already called out.

Still slightly sniffing, she walked up to the professor as he poured the foul smelling, thick, lumpy, blue-gray concoction that he, the sadist, had brewed. Standing as tall as she could, as to not give Snape the

satisfaction of seeing her cringe at the mere sight of the God awful promising 'drink'. Accepting the cup she took it to her lips, and, without hesitation, threw it all back into her throat and swallowed it all at once to have as little taste as possible lingering on her tongue.

Dimly, she was aware that Snape was not pleased with this.

But she didn't have time to ponder this. Yes, the little taste that she'd sensed was enough to make her face contort in what was probably the worst expression of her entire life, but even that was pushed to the very back of her mind as she felt it's effects taking place. It wasn't painful, it was dulling and numbing. Yes, her mind had felt completely numb, and it seemed like an unknown force was searching through every bit of her being, heart, mind, and soul, for something, or someone. It felt like she was losing herself in the haze of gray-white mists, and her ragged heartbeat thundered in her mind.

In the haze, she hadn't even realised, until she saw Snape's rather displeased demeanor, that in that haze she must have called out a name. A name that the man hadn't liked at all.

Well, that particular man hadn't liked many of the names remaining, and her mind refused to tell her who she had called out. She stared stupidly (or so she thought) at the teacher, waiting for him to give her a hint, any hint, to whom it might be, but he simply stared back.

Neither would have let out if Hermione hadn't been pulled out of her daze by the slight pressure of a gentle hand on her shoulder. Light as it was, it seemed to slap out of her the potion induced stupor. Her eyes grew wide as they met a pair of turmoiling emerald green pools. "Come on, Hermione, let's go to our seats," he said quietly.

Harry, she called out Harry's name. Oh, was her mind trying to make things as painful as possible for her? And that look in his eyes? That troubled, troubled look? Wasn't he happy he would be with his brainiac friend that would help him with the potions that Snape was sure to make hell for him? No, of course not, her mind told her as she slumped into her seat. Not after you had the chance to tell him and didn't.

She knew Harry was understanding. But sometimes that was his problem, for, in his attempt not to bother and pry people, he neglected his own needs for information, knowledge, and care. Her change of subject the night before had stung him, but he'd hidden it. Still, it must have gnawed at him. Even if he didn't love her. Simply because they were friends and he cared.

Oh, God, she was going to cry again.

Then, as though sent from Heaven, a voice came from above intent only on keeping her from shedding tears.

Of course, she knew full well that Cicciobello's voice came from the ceiling, and not from Heaven, and he was only intent on mischief, and not her comfort...still. He was...comforting. Most of the time. ... Well, this time.

"Pee-eeves, wheere aaaare youuu," he called out in a singsong voice, and from somewhere within Snape's robes, shuddering whimpers could be heard. Neither Hermione, nor Ron (who was still being sorted out) and Harry missed the terrified thrill that raced along the dark man's spine. For the first time in their lives, they saw Severus Snape scared, truly scared, and of a doll! Of course, they knew full well that Cicciobello was a very scary doll, but that still didn't manage to diminish their gleeful wonder of the discovery that they now held power over the man.

And then they saw Cicciobello's blue (plastic) eyes meet Snape's black ones. Oh, that would be a moment etched into their minds forever! "Severus," he shrilled, and, pulling down his pants, sat on top of Snape's oily hair, and, with the most retched sounding noise of anyone's life, he released a mountain of foul-stenching, brown...well, crap. Snape's pale complexion and dark robes couldn't be seen anywhere beneath the pile, but Peeves flew out crying like an infant who was swimming in his own droppings while calling out, "Filch! Filch! Help me!"

That Peeves would be calling out to FILCH, of all people, was enough to let them know that very few people in the castle appreciated Cicciobello's presence.

The students, of course, in no mood at all to stand being around an already foul teacher now completely submerged in...droppings, ran out covering their faces with shouts of "Ewwwww..."

Cicciobello was outside the dungeon door waiting for Harry, Ron, and Hermione to come by. When he finally spotted them he began to giggle madly. "Ah, daddy and papi would have been proud!" He exclaimed. No doubt that Cicciobello was proud, he kept on hovering around the trio trying to pry a compliment out of them.

Finally, Harry managed to wheeze, after a certain amount of trying, "What did you eat? Horse manure?!" It certainly smelled so. And Cicciobello beamed.

"Nah...that's too mild. I run on Centaur...and Dragon if I find them, but that's only sometimes," he tried to sound modest, failing rather miserably.

Ron, opposed to his mates, was enthusiastic. He walked off with Cicciobello, trying to bend the scary toy to his will.

"That is scary!" Hermione vocalised the thought that had been crossing both of their minds for several minutes. She saw Harry nod, and, though lightened by the sight of Snape buried under a pile of Centaur escrement, felt all her previous worries returning. She knew that Harry's had too, for his eyes had clouded over again.

o*o

"I'm scared of Ron now that he's met Cicciobello," Hermione said as she walked through the portrait hole, seeing Harry alone on the floor before the hearth again. She saw him nod, but her attempt at a lighter mood had failed miserably.

Certainly, her silence over the fact that she loved him could not still be affecting her. It couldn't! After all, one only worried that much if he...did he...? Could he...? Should she...?

But the incomplete questions in her mind were thrust aside by an alien voice from the staircase saying, "Mind if I join in?"

Her face, along with the rest of her, stiffened.

Ron.

Oh, if looks could kill Ron would have been wishing for Avada Kedavras to put him out of his misery. So eavesdropping is not enough anymore, huh? She was about to snap at him, but Harry agreed to letting him stay. Well, he was his best friend, and she couldn't deny him that, even though she'd started to think that the Diary was something special just between the two of them.

Of course, Harry had felt the same, but if Hermione really did love Ron—and he was certain she did—then she might like to have him there with them. Sure, Harry loved Ron's company, but he really didn't want to see Ron bending over Hermione's shoulder while she read out loud, not just to him anymore, but to the both of them. Completely missing the daggers that Hermione had just released from her eyes at Ron, Harry settled in to absorb her voice better, and soon, found himself conscious only of her soft, lilting whisper that washed over him, hypnotising him, and of the words that, so long before, had been penned by his mother.

Dimly he realised that it was somewhere around midnight, and they'd read all the way through the first half of Lily's term.

Since the year started, I've been having a recurring dream. It's not the first time I've had the same dream over and over, but even though it felt like something important from the very first night, I ignored it, because it's meanings eluded me. But tonight it was different. Tonight I woke right after the dream was over, and wrote everything down before my mind let it slip away. Generally, it takes a very long time for me to figure out these dreams, and I'm nowhere near the solution of this one, but finally I managed to capture the images, if not the meaning.

The setting is always limited. A dark sky, a full moon, actually, a gigantic full moon, a big, shaggy blond wolf, howling, despaired,

solitary at it. Asking for company, asking for friendship, asking for love. But he shies away from the ones around him.

That I've had this dream at least once a month, I can understand, but I don't understand what's changed.

Something has to have changed tonight, or I wouldn't be conscious of those images.

I think the wolf's call has been answered. I'm glad for him, but I want to know who that wolf is, because I know he, and the one, or ones, that answered him, need me. They're calling to me, too, but I don't know how—or even who—to answer.

But I'll find out.

That's a promise.

Lily

Quiet fell over the trio.

"That must have been the night in which the Marauders were formed," Hermione explained in an awed whisper.

And silence fell again.

Which, Ron, of course, had to disturb by saying something totally inappropriate. "That's all nice and dandy, but where's You-Know-Who? She still didn't say anything about him."

Great Ron! Hermione thought in her mind. Don't wait for the news to sink into Harry's mind, no, let him think about the insane wizard who's been trying to KILL HIM for the past sixteen years instead. God, she wanted to thwap him upside the head!

"Not that it has anything to do with this, Ron," she began, letting him know exactly what she felt of his 'joining in'. But as she continued, her voice softened, if only for Harry's sake. "It's not something close to her heart. The Marauders, and James, are," she explained, and,

seeing Harry smile, she added, "and at this point You-Know-Who hadn't really made much of a noticeable move yet, besides, at this point, she's just a girl who's living out her years at Hogwarts," she finished as she put a bookmark to the page, and delicately closed the book shut. "Anyway, it's bedtime," and with this made to get up.

Harry rose as well, but Ron stayed seated. Looking at Hermione he told her, "I need to talk to you," and with that Hermione's anger at his swelled again in her chest. She watched in near anguish as she saw Harry's face covered in an expression that told of how he felt left out and unloved while he trudged up the stairs alone calling out a distant sounding goodnight.

Not even had he clicked his door shut that she began to yell at him. "What the hell are you getting at, Ron? What are you trying to do? Do you think you have the right to prance in here with a 'Mind if I join you' after you've eavesdropped on something that hadn't been any of your business? Do you think you have any right to treat Harry like...like..." she couldn't find the words to describe what Ron was doing to Harry (incredible that Hermione Granger would be struck speechless, but anger blurred her mind to words). Not knowing what to say she began a thick stream of curses that Ron had no idea she had any knowledge of (but then, again she knew everything) at the redhead that soon had his ears the same vermilion as his hair.

And, while she was still halfway through one of her insults, he shouted at her, angrier than he'd ever been, "YOU just didn't want ME butting in you HARRY TIME!" And, after his eruption, ran up the stairs like a bat out of hell.

The both of them went to sleep seething and picturing ways of extricating revenge on the other.

At least, Hermione thought sourly, now I won't keep myself awake thinking of Harry.

But she was wrong. Very wrong.

o*o

Ron noticed that morning, of course, that Harry had been avoiding Hermione, which suited his purposes quite well considering that, for the moment, it served as a good revenge toward the girl, and, also, made it easier for him to avoid the both of them.

Of course, avoiding Krista Perril was nowhere near that easy, he realised as he turned a corner and unceremoniously banged into her, knocking them both on the hard ground. He was about to apologise till he saw who she was. "Oh, you! Great!" He mumbled bitterly as he got himself off the floor, without bothering to help her up (which he knew was wrong, but at the moment he still hated her too much), and began to dust himself off.

Even from her, rather undignified, position, she managed to look superior by piercing him with her glare below her nose. How could she, from her sitting position, look up at a man who stood over 204 cm from down her nose without looking ridiculous, but rather quite fascinating?

"Are you upset because you think you love her," and her voice was a shill oomph as she said this, "or because you feel left out?" And how could she make such sharp, cutting remarks (for it hadn't been a question at all), first thing in the morning, after a strong tumble on the floor, and while his own thoughts were in a jumble?

He chose silence as his answer. Let her figure things out on her own.

Without bothering to get up, and still managing to look menacing and imposing, she added in a softer volume, but with a steel edge, "I don't think you love her."

He snapped his neck to look at her so quickly that she feared he might have broken it in the process. "Why?" he spat at her, and she noticed that his head was still well held onto his neck, so she cursed herself for worrying.

How could she think to know him so well? How could she say things like that with such a certainty? How could she pretend to know more of what he felt than he, himself, did?

And, still on the ground, as though getting up would be an insult to herself, she fixed him with her most pregnant stare. "Because you touch her the same way you touch Ginny."

o*o

As Hermione, finally, managed to catch up to Harry, she saw in his expression that something was wrong, and he confirmed it by saying, "I feel like I'm in your way."

He didn't need to specify, for Hermione, after resisting more taunts about being with Ron, understood perfectly well what he meant to say. And so did she. "Harry, you mean more to me than anyone else in the world!" She exclaimed, and she'd never said anything in her life that she believed more. Nothing truer.

And Harry smiled. A sad smile. One that almost seemed a farewell. Farewell to my heart, he thought to himself, and told her simply, "Well, that's a lie, Hermione, but thanks anyway," and he walked away before he could give her time to deny the falsity he had said, and before she could find the strength for the truth.

Author's notes: Yep, like I said, this pretty much sucks, and the anger between Ron and Hermione seems petty, but I've worked and worked on this and...nothing. I can't seem to make it better. I hope I didn't soil my name too badly with that scene with Snape and Cicciobello. Anyway some of you have asked whether or not the name 'Cicciobello' has a meaning, and it does. I'm sure a lot of you know that in Italian (and even in Spanish) 'bello' and 'bella' (it's feminine version) mean pretty or beautiful, while 'ciccio' means fat or chubby (in its masculine form). Also, "Papi", pronounced, pha-py, almost like poppy, is a diminutive for the word Dad.

Please, let me know what you think, and oh, I would appreciate if some of you tried to give me some idea as to what to put in the time capsule, I already have a few nice things, but it's always good to have more.

In any case, if you have any opinion at all over this chapter, feel free to email me at or simply leave a review.

Thank you,

Pearl

Every parent leaves something behind for their children to remember them by. Lily Evans didn't know, when she left her diary behind, that it would help her son into knowing her and himself...or did she?

Disclaimer: I own nothing. You know it, I know it, so why bother denying it.

Thank yous: First to J Choo, who's been reading and proof-reading my story without ever having been asked. ALL my reviewers, you guys really make my day! Thank you! Thank you! Thank you! Oh, yeah, and anon, yes, all the Italian words were spelled right (^_^) and Midnight: I'm sorry, but this is going to be a VERY mushy chapter.

Warning: Like I already said this is a seriously mushy chapter with a good of TWO couples kissing and neither of them getting together! Oh, I'm evil. But, like I said, this is meant to be angsty. Anyway, prepare for a load of crappy, fluffy mush and not much comic relief. Another thing. I kind of fast forwarded a whole year and a half of Lily's diary, hope you guys don't mind. You've been warned.

And now: On with the fic.

Harry Potter and the Knowledge of a Mother

Chapter 4: Kisses and visions

"Ron! Settle down and study already!" Hermione chastised after said boy snapped his third quill in half an hour.

"Easy for you to say," he replied bitterly. Harry and Hermione exchanged exasperated glances, as they'd been doing for over a month and a half now. They knew very well that whatever it was that was bothering him had to do with a certain Ravenclaw by the name of Krista Perril. The two had been at each other's throats since the day after they returned to Hogwarts, and now they were already halfway through the month of November.

Ron knew very well that his friends were weary of his...rather awkward rivalry with the short blond girl that he'd been trying to avoid—quite unsuccessfully—for such a long time now. That girl

seemed to know exactly where to be at precisely the right time, with the most intimidating and realistic taunt, that always felt like a sounding slap to the cheek. It was really beginning to get too much. No matter how many tricks he pulled on her, the pranks, the taunts, the jokes...they were useless.

Because she knew him.

And that was scary.

Because he didn't know her nearly half as well as she knew him. He didn't know how she knew what she knew, how she could put it to use so well, how she always seemed aware of his every thought and move, or how just one of her looks could send his mind in turmoil.

And this was for different reasons.

Sometimes, she would look at him with pure undisguised venom in her eyes, which would, of course, set his blood boiling and, therefore, instigate disasters such as the huge Ravenclaw/Gryffindor tornado food fight on Halloween, which, by the way, had been a load of fun, but had resulted in even more hostility on both parties.

Some other times, though...he didn't know for sure, but he would catch a glimpse of her staring at him in near anguish. And that hurt. As much as she seemed to be trying to ruin his life and his resolve that he didn't want Harry to have the perfect life with Hermione, he never wanted to hurt her.

Never.

And this situation was making him edgy. And that was not good because Ron had always been too edgy for his own good, and adding to it was not a good idea.

So, since this train of thought was bringing him to a dark tunnel, he veered his mind onto something else. "Did you guys think of anything to put in the Memory Case?" Yep, that's good, think of that. Never mind that Gryffindors came up with enough ideas to fill dozens of capsules, it was always good to have a few extra things.

"Ah, there you are, Weasel," came a new, rather cold (more like freezing) female voice, and at the sound of it, the Trio stiffened.

"What do you want?" Ron spat. He didn't even notice that he'd just snapped the new quill that he picked up.

She seemed to soften a little, and her hands left her hips. "Just a private conference with you," she told, and her eyes spoke volumes of what she thought of his cursing tone, for they'd just turned dull.

Of course, Ron noticed this, but they were at war, and one must never pity the enemy. "Plan on pulling some kind of hex on me?" He asked bitterly, not even hinting at following her. He saw her hands fist, and her face tighten in an expression of pure rage.

"No, Ronald, I came to speak to you of something serious, but since you don't seem intent on listening, I won't waste your time, or mine," and with that she crossed her arms over her chest and made to leave.

"Alright, talk, I'm listening," Ron called after her as loudly as he dared with Madame Pince giving him one of her 'Quiet-this-is-a-library' looks.

"Never mind," she told him, and this time, she sounded resigned, tired, and sad. And she made to keep on walking, but something told Ron to hold her back, so he reached for one of her arms and pulled her back.

"No, really, tell me," he pleaded, and he stood up while saying this so that he now had to bend his back to be eye level with her. She stared at him, as if considering whether or not to tell him, then lowering her eyes to the floor before glancing at Harry and Hermione who'd been trying to follow the exchange from behind their parchments. Their guilty expressions told very clearly that they were listening in.

"Could we go somewhere private?" She asked him quietly, "Please?" She pleaded as well.

Ron had to bite back the urge to swallow and blush, and nodded, following her out of the library.

Harry and Hermione both let out a simultaneous sigh of relief. They both turned to grin at each other.

"What do you think she had to tell him?" Harry asked with knit eyebrows.

Hermione shrugged, contemplating the exchange. "I don't know," she told, "but I hope they'll make up, finally," she gave him a broad smile at the thought. "Ron needs someone like Krista, she's probably the only one that he would listen to, even more than me," she explained.

Harry, on the other hand, looked shocked at her declaration. "What?"

She raised her eyebrows at him. "Oh, come on, Harry. Don't tell me you missed the way those two look at each other!" she exclaimed.

"Yeah, with pure hatred!"

She rolled her eyes. "Harry, that's just a facade!" She told him exasperated. "They've been playing a game of cat and mouse the whole time, I really hope today they get it over with," she told him again, a small smile gracing her lips. "I really hope we get it over with too."

Of course, Harry did notice that there was a certain attraction between Ron and the Ravenclaw—along with the rest of the school—but that Hermione would be happy for them to act out on it, well, it really didn't seem to fit in the picture. After all, he was sure she'd loved the redhead for quite some time now.

Hermione must have noticed the disbelief on his face, so, rolling her eyes, she told him again for the fourth time that day, "Get off it, Harry. I'm not in love with him."

Funny that, even after all the good reasons that she gave him, and the number of times she'd said that same exact phrase before, this would be the first time that he might start to believe her.

o*o

She'd dragged him to the same hallway (which was practically always deserted) in which they'd had their first argument. The one in which she'd caught him eavesdropping on Harry and Hermione after breakfast. For some reason this made him uneasy.

"What is it, Krista?" Why was it that he didn't manage to get one bit of hostility in his question? She seemed encouraged by this however.

"I'm tired Ron," she told him finally.

"What?"

"I'm tired," she repeated. "I'm tired of this stupid game that we've been playing, of the fights, and the taunts. I'm tired of you not excepting the truth of your feelings, or your friends or mine," she explained.

I have no bloody idea of what your feelings might be! He screamed in his mind. And it was true. This girl—more than any other—was a true mystery to him. A puzzle that he couldn't put together. An enigma that he couldn't solve. A chess game in which he didn't know how to move. Of course, that could have been because she kept herself safely sheltered from him. Ron, instead, always made sure everyone knew if he was happy, or miserable, or whatever else.

"Most of all, Ron," she continued. "I'm...I'm tired of always being mad, and upset, and depressed at you," she finished.

It took the tall redhead a while to register what that might mean. Nah, it couldn't be possible. Well, maybe he should ask. So he did. "What do you mean?"

She stared at him. For a long time. Willing herself to say, yet at the same time, screaming at herself not to do so. He's not ready yet. Let it all sink in first. She instructed herself. "I want a truce, Ron. If you don't want to except the truth, fine! I'm washing my hands clean of this. Keep on destroying yourself and your friends for a lie, I won't

stop you, but this...what we've been doing...it's got to stop. It's a situation that is making me very uneasy," she told him.

He blinked. "But you were the one who started it all. You stepped into this. You never had to." Ron protested.

She nodded. "You're right," she agreed. "I just thought that Harry and Hermione suffer enough already, and you adding onto it isn't fair. They're miserable, and so are you," she concluded.

"What made you change your mind?" he asked, a lump forming in his throat without reason. In truth their little bickering had become a constant part of his school life lately, and he would probably miss it now that she'd called a truce.

"Because I'm miserable too now, and I'm only contributing to your stubbornness. Maybe if I back off, you'll come to terms with things yourself," she replied.

Ron nodded, and, after a moment of thought, actually chuckled.

"What?" She asked with knit eyebrows.

"It's just that..." he began, but how do you explain that he actually did come to term with things? "Well, you really did help me out a lot, even if not in the best of ways. I just wanted to ignore what you were trying to tell me. Probably because saying you were right would have been like saying I lost," he blushed and chuckled again.

She shook her head. "No," she contradicted. "We both lost." He didn't have time to ask her what she meant by that, that she was already turning her back on him to leave.

Again he reached his hand out to hold her arm and spin her around. "Would you bloody stop running away from me?" He yelled in anger. She'd been doing that since their first meeting, and he was really getting sick of it. "Why do you always get the say in when the conversation is over or not? It's really infuriating, you know that?" He hissed lowering himself to her eye level.

She lowered her eyes and mumbled an apology.

This shocked Ron into letting go of her. She was saying she was sorry? What the bloody hell was going on? "What's got into you?" He asked bewildered.

And this time she was upset. "Oh, hell, Ron! Why does everybody have to answer to you, huh? Why do you ask things that are always already obvious and painful to say? You know, if you just thought about it a little bit you might just get to the answers yourself, sparing both of us a load of pain and embarrassment! And I'm sick of it!" She yelled, stepping on her tip toes in a futile attempt to reach his height. "I'm sick of it," she repeated. And, terrified, she realised that her vision was blurring, and that her eyes were beginning to water.

Frozen under her watery unwavering gaze, and the anger that he'd caused her he could only mumble a poor sounding, shocked, "Sorry..."

This seemed to deflate her. He didn't know. He didn't realise. And she'd just scared him off. "Yeah, I'm sorry, too," she whispered lowering her gaze to the floor and making to turn around.

"Wait!" Ron called to her. She stopped with her back to him, her face turned so that he knew he had her attention, but still not letting him look at her face.

"Yes?"

"Uh...uhm...well..." come on Ron, spill it! He yelled at himself. "Do...do you mind...if we can still be friends?" He stuttered, a thick blush spreading across his cheeks. God, he sounded like a bloody grade schooler!

But she turned so that their eyes could meet, and, with a small smile taunted, "Do you think you can manage being my friend?"

Ah, there was the Krista that he'd known before they'd begun arguing. There was the sarcastically funny girl that he'd met when he'd bloodied her ex-boyfriend's nose. "I think I can handle it," he

responded confidently with a lopsided goofy grin, his freckles dancing merrily on his cheeks.

"Well, then I'll see you around," she said as she began to walk away again, this time without him stopping her, but before she turned the corner, she faced him again and added a simple word that nearly melted him into mush. "Friend."

That was as good a place as any to start, right?

o*o

Not too late that night, probably only around 10:30 p.m., in the Gryffindor common room, empty because everyone (including Ron) had gone to their beds to dream (and get some rest for Hogsmeade weekend), Harry and Hermione were sitting by the hearth, with a crackling fire warming them, as Hermione's voice washed over them both, pouring out the words that had been penned by Lily Marianne Evans.

They had reached the Christmas of her second year, and were reading of her mirth of the holidays, of her giddy state as she met her family after the long months of separation, and of worries. Worries, that, this time were brought on by visions of betrayal.

I saw the dark future of one of us. I don't know who it could be, because, if he were to make the right choices in life, he won't come to it. Yet, as it is, I fear it is a strong possibility. It was hazy, so I don't know the details, but he'll turn away from us. I can't think of who it could be, but he wore blood stained Gryffindor colours, and I fear him.

There is a dark shadow on the rise. A wizard. Powerful. And dark. I don't know his name yet, but I'm sure I will soon enough. The betrayer will turn away from us and to this wizard's shadow, and if it happens, someone else must face him and stop him.

I didn't know this shadow, either, even if it reminded me very much of James. He was just a shadow, but the outline of his hair was black, and he had bright, brave green eyes, and on his forehead (or where I guessed his forehead would be) a bright, glowing red...squiggle. It

must have been some type of scar. It pulsed in pain when the Dark Lord neared him. It was thin, blinding, it looked like a fire bolt, and it weighed heavy on his shoulders.

The boy must face them both, and then, all I know is that he'll have to protect his light, or perish.

"Light? I've heard of something like that! I'll have to remember to check into it and do some research," Hermione said out loud, mostly speaking with herself. For a while she kept mumbling the way she usually did when concentrating on remembering something.

Watching her, Harry realised that he didn't want this reading session to end today. "Uhm...Hermione?" He called to her quietly. She snapped out of her thoughts to look inquisitively at Harry. "Uhm...listen, since tomorrow we don't have classes or anything, and since the Duelling Club with Dumbledore and Snape is in the late afternoon, do you think we could...keep reading longer tonight?" He asked apprehensively.

She smiled at how small and childish he looked while asking this. The Dursleys had never given him anything, and now, even though he knew his friends loved him, he was still afraid of being refused. And rejected. "Sure, Harry," she reassured him, "I'll read till we drop from sleep deprivation." And with that she turned back to diary, finishing the passage that she'd been on earlier, reading several more.

My visions lately have been getting very jumbled, and more involved as well. The betrayer has left my dreams, but the wolf has returned, probably because it's full moon time again. This time, though, there's more detail, and more confusion, and it's far clearer than I've ever seen it. And what scares me is that there are people in it. People for whom I care deeply.

I saw the four of them, looking as mischievous as always, yet sad, quiet before the Whomping Willow, in front of the full moon. There was Remus, face shamed and downcast sitting on a knot of the Whomping Willow, the same wolf I always dream of, next to him, comforting him, it would seem, but truly haunting him. On Remus's left, Peter, quiet, and scared, trembling, with a small mouse sitting on

his shoulder looking just as terrified as he. On Remus's right, Sirius, sitting in his taunting, superior manner, trying to calm down a terrified, great, big, dark, long haired dog, cowering at the idea of something.

And then, in front of them all, as always in the part of the fearless leader, stood James, smiling at his companions, but ashen, his hand resting on the strong back of a big, beautiful stag, edgy but fearless.

All of them turned to look at me with a small, sad smile on their faces, waving at me, and disappearing into the tree.

I can't figure out what it could mean, there are too many pieces of the puzzle missing, but I do know one thing. That smile, and that wave at the end, felt very much like a farewell. A goodbye. It felt final.

And I'm scared.

As they kept on reading, they found out of the Marauders (they'd started calling themselves that after coming back from Christmas) constantly disappearing, of how they'd put distance between themselves and Lily and Jenna, of Lily's ever clearing visions, of how after the visions kept getting stronger she decided to go talk to Dumbledore.

It turned out that the ancient wizard could help, for he, himself, was a Seer. This surprise Harry and Hermione not in small amount.

They'd read through their adventures of the Duelling Club during second year, learned of her summer spent with Jenna where she confessed all of her visions, and of their return to Hogwarts for third.

They found out of how Voldemort started to make his name known towards the middle of third year, and of how Lily had always known that it had been Tom Riddle.

I was cleaning the trophy cases, helping out the caretaker (who is a freak by the way) so that he would go easy on James during his detention, and as I passed one of the cases I saw one that had been awarded to a boy named Tom Marvolo Riddle. I felt his hate for his

Muggle born father, for all Muggles, for his orphanage, and then I saw his Dark shadow reflected in the glass of the casing.

Next to those visions of the wolf and the Marauders, it was the scariest thing I'd ever seen. I was sweating cold just looking at it, and I was glad the caretaker didn't make me open the case and clean it or I might have fainted.

But I know he's Voldemort (I don't know why people started calling him You-Know-Who).

He's sent attacks on the families of Muggleborns, and now, many Muggleborn students have left school to go home where they think it's safer. Fools, I say. There is no safer place than Hogwarts, under the care of Dumbledore. After all, Tom Riddle always feared him.

Slytherins however, with their distaste for us Muggleborn, have taken to tormenting us. I seem to be one of their favourite targets, not only because I'm Muggle and a Gryffindor, but also because I best most of them in nearly every subject, and because I'm close to the Marauders, to which all of them have fallen, at least once, victims.

Most of her entries throughout her third year were of that like. They spoke of the attacks on the Muggleborn families, of the Slytherins' harassment towards her, of the Marauders pranks, and of her regular life.

The only difference was that nearly at the end of the year she had begun dating a Gryffindor one year ahead by the name of Jonathan, also a Muggleborn.

Harry had been bothered by this, but he could understand the fact that she wouldn't be sharing her first kiss with his father, much in the same way he hadn't shared any of his firsts with Hermione, though he wished he had.

That summer she'd spent with Jonathan.

In forth, the harassment from the Slytherins had begun to become violent. Near to Christmas break she'd been sitting by the lake with

Jonathan when eight of them all came at once to make fun of the Muggle couple. Jonathan, apparently, had tried to put up a fight, but soon ended up whimpering and telling Lily that it might have been better to be seeing other people (many an insult was spit out of both Harry and Hermione's mouths at this) while running off to save his own hide.

She'd been cornered by the eight big leering Slytherins, ready to pull out her wand and hex them all, when Cicciobello had come to her rescue. Or rather, James had come to her rescue on his return from Quidditch practice.

The Slytherins had taunted James by saying that he was only big and brave when in the company of the Murder Doll, so James had dismissed the bundle of trouble, pulled out his wand, and shot out the most colourful hexes Lily had ever heard of before they could even say "Muggle".

It was then, in that precise moment today, that I realised that things are different. That James is different. And that what I've felt and feel for him have always been different.

He's dear to me. More than myself.

Hermione had chosen not to stop and comment this with Harry, and rushed on through the rest of the year, which had, obviously, been very stressful for Lily. She'd said that her new found feelings for James had brought her closer to him, but yet, at the same time, she felt immensely distant from him because of all the secrets he was keeping from her. She knew very well that her visions were a big chunk of his secrets, but she couldn't quite decipher them yet, for she didn't have the knowledge, despite the intense researches.

By the time they'd reached the end of forth year, and Lily was describing her ride home it had been 3:30 am, yet neither Harry nor Hermione seemed to mind.

Today, I have a lot to say. I just got home from King's Cross, and Petunia is already on my back, but I don't care. Yesterday, I did something completely outrageous that I thought I would never have

the courage to do. Then again, I wasn't sorted into Gryffindor for nothing, now did I?

After the Leaving Feast (and I didn't write this right away because I wasn't sure if I could have handled my powers in the state I was in) I got my guts together, walked over to James before he went off with the rest of the Marauders and told him that I had to talk to him. He followed me right away, probably afraid that some other Slytherin needed a good butt kicking. Once we reached a dark hallway that always seems to be completely empty I turned around and...stared at him. I didn't know what to say!

He was obviously getting worried under my intense scrutiny of him, and I'm sure he couldn't figure out what the thoughts running through my head might have been like. After all, even during these past six months since I realised what he meant, and still means, to me, I'm pretty sure I didn't let it on much, and the only one to know is Jenna, and that is only because I told her.

"Lily are you feeling well?" He asked me. God! How am I not supposed to love him the way I do when he looks at me from behind his glasses, all worried and caring and wonderful, and with that deep, deep voice that never fails in its attempt to turn me into a big puddle of quivering mush? He has such a beautiful speaking voice, always clear and cheerfully lilting (even when he's not joking) and I love that in him, just as I love the rest of him, the good and the bad.

"Lily?" Oh, he was really worried by that point and I was screaming to myself: 'Answer him! Answer him, you dolt!'

"I—" I started, but my voice was quivering. After clearing my throat I tried again. "I...never thanked you...properly...for helping me with those Slytherins at Christmas...or for all the other times that you helped me out...with anything. I guess I kind of always took you for granted," Jeez, it sounded like I was apologising for all my sins. And I was lying. Even though I had not realised my feelings sooner, I had always appreciated his constant presence. And I'd been stuttering, too. God! Was I obvious!

But he was blushing! I couldn't believe it. James Potter, known by the female Gryffindor population as "Mr. Suave", was blushing at my feeble attempts at thanking him. His hand found the back of his head the way it always did when he was nervous.

I heard him clear his throat and, after what looked like a thorough selection of his words, said, "I've never felt as though I was taken from granted, Lily, by you most of all," if he'd heard the incessant squealing that was going on in my mind he would have probably asked how a Banshee found its way into Hogwarts. Well, even though he couldn't hear the sound that my mind was producing, disturbing even to myself, I'm sure he didn't miss the smile that had found its way onto my face and couldn't seem to get lost. I'm sure it counted a minimum of sixty-seven teeth.

"Really?" I know it sounded stupid but I couldn't help but ask as I stepped closer to him. Dimly I realised that we were so close our toes were touching. He didn't say anything, but he nodded stiffly. I don't know if it was the fact that I was standing so close to him, or if it was the fact that, despite his way of speaking with the ladies was as smooth as it was, he'd never really had much of a romantic female contact with anyone before. Either way, I prayed that he wasn't afraid of me.

"Still," I heard myself say. When the heck did I start sounding so confident? Oh, what a load of codswallop was I dumping onto myself! "I feel like I still need to properly thank you," and then I really don't know what possessed me, but I stepped up on my tiptoes and put my lips on his. At first he was shocked, and only kept his lips stiffly closed. I didn't move until he responded.

I honestly thought he would push me away. I expected to hear him say that he only thought of me as a good friend and nothing more, and I was already prepared for the worst, for his rejection. And then, his lips softened and started to massage mine. I felt his arms circling my waist, holding me closer to him, and then it was all a blur and I was nothing but a bundle of crazy, impossible emotions.

I don't know if James felt that when I kissed him, but I'd never felt that kind of bonding before. Jonathan had been my first boyfriend, but I'd

had a couple of experiences with kisses before him, and they had honestly never felt like this. Maybe it was because we knew each other so well, and were so comfortable around each other, or maybe it was simply because I loved him, and love him all the more now.

We met perfectly at every shift of our lips, clashing of tongues (I'm blushing just penning the words), beat of our hearts, and when we both, at the same time, parted for air, breathing heavily, I wished it had lasted longer, although in itself it had felt like an eternity. It had all been so perfect, that now that it was over, I was afraid. Scared to death.

What if he'd only gone along with me? What if this feeling of perfection and deep connection was one sided? What if I looked in his eyes and saw confusion, fear...disgust even? No, I couldn't look in his eyes. I disentangled my hands from his hair (when had they found their way there anyway?), and was about to step away from him.

"Lily?" There it was again, that concerned voice. Jeez, I blew it! I ruined everything that our friendship stood for. "Lily," this time a statement, a bidding for me to look into his eyes, and I could never refuse him anything. I looked up.

Yes, he was confused, and worried for me. He was always worried for me. And suddenly it didn't matter anymore. It didn't matter if he'd just kissed me back because he didn't know what else to do, it didn't matter if he didn't love me, and, strangely enough, it didn't matter if our friendship would change. He would always be James Potter, prankster and all around general good guy who stood by his friends no matter how many stupid things they did.

He would always be James Potter, and I would always love him, and if he didn't love me, I would at least have the memory of this perfect kiss we just shared.

I don't know how or why, but I smiled at him, and said "Thank you," one more time before walking away. And that was the last time I saw him. I'm sure Jenna noticed this, for today she helped me avoid the Marauders. We sat in our own cabin on the Express, and I told her

what happened. She's convinced I should have spoken to him, but my mind tells me that I have to give him time to figure this all out, so I'll give it to him. I'll give him a whole summer. And no matter what will happen when we come back to September, I'll stand by him, and he by me.

That much I'm certain of.

Love

Lily

The tension in the Common Room was so palpable it could have been cut by a knife. The description of the kiss itself told little, but a fourteen year old in love usually didn't have a clear enough mind to describe much of anything. Still, the intensity with which Lily loved James had been so strong, so...unwavering over the course of the year that it had been very hard for both Harry and Hermione to believe that she actually had been only fourteen at the time.

Then again, when I realised everything I felt much the same way, Hermione reminded herself. The difference was that Lily had excepted it and welcomed it, while she had denied it and turned her back on it for far too long, and now there was hardly any chance for her.

She felt the heat from Harry's body, sitting next to hers, seeping into her flesh, making her aware of him in every way. His breath, his heartbeat (it was so quiet now she could even hear that), his presence. She didn't know why, but she needed to look at him, guess what he was thinking.

Her heart nearly burst out of its cage when she found him staring at her with an unreadable expression on his face. His gaze was so full on confusion and longing that she felt a vice tightening around her heart. Oh, she wished so much that the longing was for her, and not for his parents!

She turned to face him better and found her face mere centimetres from his. Her heart was now in her throat, making her breathing

difficult. "Harry..."she managed to mumble, but even she didn't hear her own voice, for how quietly it had escaped her lips. She wanted to be comforting to him, but all she managed to do was stare at him like some love sick puppy, wishing for him to kiss the same way his parents had kissed in the pages just read.

She chastised herself for those thoughts, and closing her eyes she licked her lips before biting down on the lower one. Stop it, Hermione! You're his best friend! Nothing more! But she still kept on hoping.

Harry, seeing her bite that lovely full lower lip of hers had to suppress the urge to kiss her senseless. Stop staring at her! You're scaring the living magic out of her! Look, she can't even look you in the eye now! He was screaming all sort of things at himself, but a small part of his mind kept on pointing out that the way she'd read Lily's words had seemed far too real, involved, as though she'd felt something all the like for a long time now, and some part of his heart kept rejoicing at the hope that he might have been the one to cause that. After all, she'd begun to convince him that Ron was nothing but a good friend to her, and it couldn't have been Krum for she'd said that when dating him she thought of someone else. Was it horrible to hope that she'd been thinking about him? Oh, but she looked ever so inviting facing him with her eyes shut, her eyelashes fluttering against her cheeks, her teeth working her lower lip...and then she opened her eyes and looked at him.

And they were both lost.

Neither was sure who had initiated it, but sure enough, they found their mouths locking with each other, their lips slightly parted as they pressed gently against each other. It was a soft kiss, almost as though they were afraid of breaking each other, or waking up from the dream that they'd suddenly found themselves in.

They'd stayed locked in that chaste kiss for a long time, but soon found the need to feel more of each other, make sure it was real.

Hermione lifted her arms to touch his strong shoulders, the muscles tense beneath her finger, his large hands encircling her waist and

holding her closer to him. Their mouths opened simultaneously and the kiss became deeper without losing any of its gentleness.

Her head was swimming as Harry's mouth made her lose any conscious thought, and all she was aware of was the fact that they were kissing, and it couldn't have possibly been a dream for it was far too good and real. She could feel the warmth of his hands through her shirt, the silky strands of his messy hair tangling in her fingers, his tongue and lips meeting hers perfectly. No, dreams didn't feel as good as this.

Harry wasn't aware of anything but Hermione. That must have been the reason why, after she moaned quietly into her mouth, he found the strength to break away from her. This was wrong. She was his best friend. And he was sure the only reason for which she'd kissed him back must have been the atmosphere that had created itself with his mother's words. "Hermione, I..." how was he supposed to apologise? She looked so hurt at the moment. God, I'm such a stupid git! He screamed. I should have never kissed her, he was sure that she'd been hurt by his kiss. He'd taken advantage of a moment full of yearning, and he hoped she didn't hate him. "I shouldn't have done that. Sorry. I...I better go. I have...practice in three hours," he stumbled out, and got up to leave mumbling a good night without turning back to look at her. If he did, he might have just tried to kiss her pain away. And that would not have been a good thing to do.

Hermione watched him go as she sat along by the dying fire, tears forming in her eyes as she clutched Lily's diary to her heart. Their kiss had felt as perfect as theirs, so why was it that Harry had run away from her saying that it was a mistake.

Because he thinks it was.

o*o

As Harry made his way down the dormitory stairs in full Quidditch gear a whole hour earlier than he was supposed to, he thought of good ways of avoiding Hermione throughout the day, unfortunately, that day they all had Duelling Training for most of the day with Dumbledore and Snape (he still couldn't believe Dumbledore had

been their Defence Against the Dark Arts teacher for the past two years), so they would be training all day in the same room for hours, but maybe avoiding her wouldn't be too hard for everybody from fourth year and up would be there as well.

God, I'm such a prat!

In the common room there was enough light to see by since the sun had begun to rise already, but he didn't expect to see Hermione fast asleep in the same spot he left her. And most of all he didn't expect to see her clutching the diary to herself while the dim sunlight glinted off the wet tracks that tears had left on her cheeks.

Ok, he was officially the biggest prat ever to walk the Hogwarts' halls, and the guiltiest one at that.

In her troubled sleep Hermione mumbled a word, or better a name. "Harry," was the soft whisper. Okay, now he was the guiltiest prat on the face of the planet.

He couldn't leave her there for the Gryffindor Quidditch team to come down and see her in her misery. Kneeling in front of her, he brought his lips close to her ear, and whispered, "Wake up, Hermione," but she didn't rouse. He tried several more times, but she'd obviously cried herself to sleep and that must have exhausted her. Looking around to see if anybody might have seen him, he bent down, putting his arms under her waist and knees and hefted her light weight up, carrying up the stairs in the way Muggle man carry their new wives across the threshold. Of course, this would probably be the only time he would ever be able to do this with Hermione.

All too soon he reached the portrait that led to her Head Girl's room, and whispered the password. The portrait swung open and he entered the lovely room that had been Hermione's new home since the year had started. Walking towards the bed, he gently lowered her onto the mattress, took off her shoes and cloak, and draped a warm blanket over her body to keep her warm.

He should have left right away, he knew that, but he found himself unable to walk away from her sleeping form. Soon, he found himself

caressing her hair away from her tearstained cheeks. He sighed deeply, and began to whisper to her what he knew he should have had the courage to say while she was awake. "I'm sorry, Hermione," he started, "I shouldn't have done that, I ruined everything. I really hope you don't hate me too much," he sighed again, and began to rub his thumb over her cheek, wiping away the trace of salty tears. "Kissing you...well, it was the worst thing I've ever done...but...I don't know, it never felt so good...or right...to do the wrong thing," and then he leaned over to place a feather light kiss on her forehead, one on each of her eyes, drying her wet lashes, and then, almost not touching at all, he ever so gently placed his lips over hers.

"I hope I didn't lose you," his voice was catching in his throat now. "You and Ron are the most important things in my life. I love you," he finished in the faintest of whispers. Leaning over, he kissed her lips once more, just as lightly as before, and, after memorising her sleeping face, walked back out of the bedroom, into the Common Room to retrieve his Firebolt from where he left it, and headed out to the Gryffindor Memory Garden to work off the emotional stress that he'd manage to work himself into.

Meanwhile, in the Head Girl's room, fresh tears managed to work their way down Hermione's cheeks.

To be continued.

Coming next chapter:

-Krista asks Ron to Hogsmeade

-Coming back to 5th Lily finds out about her visions being true

-Harry and Hermione talk about her past relationship with Krum and her insecurities

Author's notes: Well, like I said that was a load of crappy, fluffy mush, but I really enjoyed writing it, and I hoped you liked reading it, and even if you didn't remember to leave a review or email me at . Flames excepted. Go ahead, I like BBQs.

Pearl Drop Angel

Every parent leaves something behind for their children to remember them by. Lily Evans didn't know, when she left her diary behind, that it would help her son into knowing her and himself...or did she?

I apologise for the delay in the posting of this chapter. At first, when I planned of writing this story, I put myself on a strict updating schedule by which I should be nearly done with posting. Unfortunately, even if my academic year was on May 20th, life got in the way, and my restaurant is busier than ever, keeping me from my two favourite pass times, writing and drawing. Unfortunately, this delay causes problems in the plot as well. In future chapters there will be a lot of reference to the Order of the Phoenix, but since the book is coming out so soon, I'm afraid my version won't meet JKR's completely, so The Knowledge of a Mother is probably going to end up seeming an alternate universe (I have no intention of changing my plans to accommodate the original plot, I'm sorry). I've actually vowed not to read the fifth book until I finish this, and I won't. I hope you all bare with me anyhow. Thank you. And thank you for all you wonderful reviewers. You really make my day and encourage me to write faster and better every day. Thank you all, and thanks to J Choo, for reading this and helping me with it, spell checking and encouraging me. Thank you.

Disclaimer: I own nothing. You know it, I know it, so let's just get over it.

And now: on with the fic

Harry Potter and the Knowledge of a Mother

Chapter 5: Lily's Promise

Harry was making his way to the Great Hall completely absorbed in his thoughts. That morning, after having brought Hermione back to her own room, he had managed to avoid her rather magnificently, but that was just because she didn't seek him out. Whether to be glad or upset over this, he didn't know, so he held a mixture of both.

He'd spent the entire morning, from 5:30 on, in the Gryffindor's Forever Remember garden, flying on his trusty Firebolt to get his poor,

emotionally abused mind off the girl that haunted his every waking moment. Of course, to no avail. He kept on seeing her face, her swollen lips, the look of absolute pain and fright—for Merlin's sake! Fright! —that painted her features after he'd managed to break away from the spell that her mouth had cast on him.

Yep, avoiding her would have been the best thing to do for a while. Even she seemed to agree with that thought, for she hadn't searched for his company all morning even when—he was sure—she knew perfectly well that he would be perched atop his broom the entire morning.

And now, freshly showered and dressed, he was making his way to the end of the Gryffindor table just as the usual feasting amount of food appeared on the platters. He didn't need to look to know exactly where Hermione would be sitting, along with Ron, so he searched an empty place next to anyone that wouldn't have found suspicious his sudden need to sit next to them.

The Stalker Mob cleared a lot of seats upon seeing him nearing, but he completely avoided that section of the table and looked on. The Creevy brothers were all sitting together, Kevin's thug look completely clashing with his brothers', and shuddered at the thought of having to sit with them. They, too, made room for him, and, Harry thought, if worst came to worst, he would have to settle for them.

Thankfully, however, he found that a seat next to Dean, across from Seamus, was unoccupied. That would be a good arrangement, nothing wrong with sitting with two roommates, and their seats were close enough to Ron and Hermione's so that anything would seem out of place, but far enough to be out of immediate hearing range, which was perfect because it would allow him the relief of not having to acknowledge the two friends that he couldn't bear to sit next to that precise morning.

Of course, Ron would have none of that.

Just as Harry was saluting his roommates, the redhead shouted—unnecessarily, for he was only a few seats away—allowing the entire

Great Hall to hear him. "Hey Harry, come over here, we saved you a seat."

No, Ron, he pointed out to himself as he looked over at the pair, you saved me a seat. It was painful, but true. Hermione had stiffened at hearing Ron call his name, and stared at her plate completely avoiding eye contact with the Boy Who Lived. What was even worse was the way Ron leaned comfortably with his whole back against Hermione's side, in complete physical trust of each other, at ease in one another's contact.

He understood they didn't love each other now, but it was like a knife turning in the open wound at the thought that he would never be able to touch her the same way Ron did, as much as he would have liked. To Harry, every touch, caress, or any kind of physical contact with her was so special that he treasured it in small amounts. Greed, like what had taken over him in the earliest hours of the morning, would destroy any kind of relationship he had and would ever have with her. And, honestly, it was like an overdose of a very powerful drug.

Hermione was addictive, but so strong that he had to take her in small amounts or suffer the consequences. Now that he'd tasted her lips, he would suffer withdrawal every moment he was away from her, but seeking her out would only make it worse. However, he had no choice since fate seemed not to favour his plan of avoiding her.

"What's wrong, mate?" Ron asked, his eyebrows knit in serious concern for his friend.

Harry snapped out of his thoughts. He must have had a look on his face that said: I'm to be pitied. Well, he didn't want to be pitied. "Nothing," he replied quickly, and sat in the seat across from his friend, picking at his plate of food in much the same manner Hermione had been doing.

Strangely, Harry noticed, Ron seemed to be unawares of his friends' discomfort and the thick tension that hung over their heads. He also seemed unaware of the fact that there was food in front of him, and that he should have been hungrier than usual because of the

extremely tiring practice that he'd endured that morning (at his own hand).

Now, that Ron would be unaware of food, was, to Harry and anyone else who knew the youngest Weasley male, a clear neon-blinking beacon to worry. Ron was always aware of food.

He was about to ask what was wrong with Ron, when Hermione finally spoke up, her annoyance clear in her voice. "Instead of staring at her, why don't you go over and ask her to go to Hogsmeade with you tomorrow?" It was then that Harry noticed that Ron had been staring at something—or rather, someone—over at the Ravenclaw table.

Ron was indignant. "Just like that? No way!" And with a humph he turned back in the direction of the Ravensclaws when his eyes grew wide in horror.

Hermione smirked. "Well, she's coming over here, at least ask her to sit with us," she suggested cheekily. If she couldn't have a happily ever after fairy tale kind of relationship, at least let her friend have one.

Ron disagreed. "No bloody way!"

But Krista Perril was already at their table, looking, they all noticed, even lovelier than usual. Obviously, she was trying to catch a certain male's attention. "Hello, Ron," she called with a sincere smile, and then as an after thought, "Hermione. Harry." The two had to bite back the urge to snicker. She was obviously not very aware of their presence, and if she cared little.

"Hi," Ron called, rather loudly, the way he did when he was nervous or talking to a particularly pretty girl. At the moment he was both, so his friends weren't surprised, yet Krista seemed pleased.

Hermione, managing to stay composed despite the fact that Ron's uneasiness amused her to no end, smiled at the girl and cheerfully offered, "Krista, why don't you sit with us?"

She sat down with a smile and said, "I just finished eating, I won't stay long, thanks anyway. Actually I just came to ask Ron something," she admitted, her cheeks flushed a light pink.

Ron perked up at this and sat up, relieving Hermione of his bodies bulk. When she sighed heavily, Harry couldn't help but smile at her. In return she blushed, and looked back down at her plate, a pretty smile gracing her lips. Not all hope is lost, they both thought.

"What?" Ron asked eagerly, sitting at the edge of his seat. Oh, yeah, Harry and Hermione had forgotten about him and Krista and their little exchange.

"Would you come to Hogsmeade with me tomorrow?" Ron was shocked at this, and didn't bother to hide it as he opened and closed his mouth in a rather convincing imitation of a goldfish.

"Huh?" He very intelligently and eloquently put.

"I need your help with something," she replied shyly, but they all understood that the only way Ron would be providing her with anything useful would have been for him to give her a lovely day as her company.

"Okay," he mumbled, as he gained back some semblance of speech and rational thinking.

"Great!" She exclaimed as her smile became radiantly blinding. "I'll see you in Training in a few hours then," she saluted, getting up and walking toward the Great Hall door.

Watching her, mesmerized, "I've got a date with Krista," he whispered whimsically. This was a dream. It was far too good to be true. Things that wonderful didn't happen to Ron Weasley. They happened to everyone else, but not Ron Weasley. He silently prayed for a sign that would tell him this was true.

"It's a miracle!" Hermione exclaimed jovially as she gave Ron's shoulder a slight shove all the while giving him a proud smile. Oh, Merlin! It was true! In dreams Hermione didn't make fun of him the

way she just did, and the shove felt real, so this must have been reality!

"When did this happen?" Harry asked confused. He remembered the encounter the two had in the library the day before, but when did things change that much?

Ron seemed as confused as he while giving him a shrug. "I don't know," he started, "it just kind of clicked," he replied.

Again Hermione gave him a playful shove. "Are you planning on leaving your lady alone up until tomorrow?" She asked in a way that much resembled Mrs. Weasley's.

"Uh..." Ron put in again.

"Go take her for a walk or something, you git!" She hissed loudly, pushing him out of his seat and towards the door, where he saw Krista making her way toward the great front door of the castle, probably with the intention of taking a walk, as Hermione had said. Well, he wasn't going to let the know-it-all tell him twice. Without second thought to his friends or his uneaten lunch he raced after the blonde, calling her name.

"Yes, Ron?" She asked, confused, and worried he might have already thought against going on a date with her.

"Um..." he began loquaciously. His hand rubbed the back of his head as his freckles stood out against his blushing cheeks. "Do you...want to take a walk around the lake with me or something?" He stuttered nervously.

Again, that pretty, sunny smile of hers graced her lips. "I'd love to," and so without a word they made their way outside. They were quiet until they reached the water bank of the lake and started to walk its perimeter and Krista spoke. "How's it going with those two?" She asked curiously.

Ron blinked. It took him a second to realize that she'd just asked of Harry and Hermione. He was too intent on pondering his luck. "Oh,"

he mumbled, his elation dropping a notch. "I don't know, today they're weird. I think something happened last night," he concluded, speaking more to himself, than to the girl beside him.

"Why do you think that?" Krista asked with knit eyebrows. Having always paid attention to all three members of the Trio, she was usually pretty aware of any change in their mood or behaviour just by looking at them, but that morning she'd been more preoccupied in getting her guts together to ask Ron to Hogsmeade.

"Well, this morning, I went down to the garden, to warm up for Quidditch practice. Being Captain I usually make sure I'm the first one there, but this morning I wasn't. Harry was already there doing all kinds of crazy stunts. I mean, he's usually pretty reckless, so it wasn't surprising that he was doing those sort of things, and I'm glad because if he didn't he wouldn't be the machine that he is, but usually, he saves the real moves for the games, and only practises a couple a day," he explained.

"And today?" She encouraged him.

"He was just...going all out! I mean, he wasn't holding anything back! And he was covered in sweat all the way through his robes, so I'm guessing he'd been there for at least an hour. Something happened," he told her. "He only does that when he wants to let out some frustration," he explained. "And today...today he was a monster! He caught the Snitch seven times in two hours! That's got to be like a world record or something! And he wouldn't stop! All through practice he wouldn't take a break, and even when we finished practice, he wouldn't leave the garden. When he came down to lunch just now his hair was wet," he mused, demonstrating that, even though he ignored his food, he didn't ignore his friends. He just made it look like he ignored them. "That probably means that he just finished taking a quick shower before running down to lunch, and what's worse it that he didn't eat anything at all, even after all those hours of flying," he finished, now seriously starting to worry that his friends were ruining themselves in the stupid game of 'I'm not going to admit I love him/her.'

Krista had to admire him for that. One of the reasons for which Harry and Hermione had been so miserable the last couple of years had been Ron, but he cared for his friends, and now that he knew he only thought of Hermione as a sister, he was completely aware of the pain he'd caused and was ready to make amends by helping them. He was truly worried, so she took his hand, giving it a gentle squeeze in support. "And what of Hermione?"

He took a deep sigh. Before answering he thought for a second. "When I got back from practice I wanted to ask her if Harry's behaviour had something to do with his Mum's diary, but I couldn't find her anywhere. She wasn't in the Memory Garden to watch us practice, which isn't really that weird since she only comes and watches us every once in a while, for the important games and stuff, and she wasn't in the common room or in the library, or any of her other usual spots. I even checked Moaning Myrtle's bathroom," he told her exasperated.

She quirked an eyebrow at this. "Moaning Myrtle's bathroom?" She asked both confused and amused at once.

Remembering she didn't know the story he brushed it aside, "Oh, I'll tell you that some other time, it's a really long story," and he continued on to his friends' actions. "Anyway, since I didn't know where to look I checked her room, and she was there, still asleep. She was clutching that bloody diary and she was crying," he told her.

She gasped at hearing this. "She was crying in her sleep?" And, as she saw Ron's nod, she remembered Hermione's exhausted eyes and tired demeanour, despite her cheery attitude toward her.

Ron went on. "Anyway, I woke her up, but then she started acting weird. She wouldn't talk to me; she shoved me out of the room saying she needed to get ready for lunch, even if lunch was pretty far off. I think she wanted to just eat as fast as she could and run off without meeting Harry, since he's usually always kind of late to lunch anyway. Might have worked, too, if the elves hadn't served so late today," he explained. "You should have seen her stiffen up when I called to Harry to come and sit with us. Neither of them ate anything, and they wouldn't look at each other for anything," he finished.

Krista now wished she hadn't asked to begin with. She knew that Ron felt guilty over the fact that he'd caused so much distress to his own friends, and she knew that, now, he wanted to help them along. But she, as well as he, knew that there was something holding them back. Something that scared them. She also knew that the previous night something must have happened to enhance those fears in one or the other, or maybe even both of the two.

"I hope they straighten things out," she whispered out loud.

"Yeah, me too," Ron mumbled.

She looked up at him. He was miserable. "Don't worry," she reassured him, placing her arms around his lean waist, marvelling at how sharp and chiselled he was. "If they can't work things out for themselves, we'll help them along, now won't we?" She asked him rhetorically, a cheeky grin on her face.

She was contagious. He grinned, too, lowering his face to her level as to place his forehead against hers, leaning his arms on her shoulder, "I don't think you're leaving me much of a choice, here, now are you?" He joked.

She gave a pretty little shrug, "Maybe," she replied, and her grin broadened, "but would you refuse me even if you did?"

She definitely knew him far too well.

Without waiting for his response she brought her lips to meet his for the first time. I couldn't refuse you if I tried, Ron answered mentally.

o*o

Though it would be expected that Ron's sudden departure would leave behind eerie and uncomfortable silence, this was not the case. As a matter of fact, the Great Hall was in a complete state of chaos as it was discovered that the delay in the delivery of everyone's meal had been a lovely little blue bundle of trouble known as Ciccibello.

After he'd drawn a rather fantastic imitation of the Venus de Milo on Snape's chest (many did not appreciate having to watch the doll forcefully undressing the living mozzarella that was their Potions professor) despite the greasy man's desperate attempts at evasion, he was now performing the most unlikely striptease for McGonagall and Trelawney while Dumbledore looked on amused. Turned out the ancient headmaster was quiet fond of the devil that possessed the plastic doll.

Even Harry and Hermione, who had been, up until a few moments earlier, wallowing in their own self-pity, had to laugh at what was going on. Professor McGonagall seemed particularly shocked at what was taking place as she couldn't take her eyes off the Ciccibello, which was dancing a rather unusual sort of slow bump and grind to Joe Cocker's "You can leave your hat on." Nobody knew where the music was coming from, and only the Muggle raised knew the tune, but nobody really cared.

Harry found himself giving Hermione a wide grin, which she answered shyly. Yes, The Kiss had strained what they'd had quite a bit, but it could still be mended, and Hermione was the first to try. "Do you want to read some more?" she asked, referring to the diary.

"Common room's going to be full until the Training starts," he answered reasonably.

She thought for a second. "We could go to my room," she said boldly, hoping that Harry wouldn't take this the wrong way. Which is the wrong way, anyway?

Harry seemed surprised at first, but then, standing up and nodding, he mumbled an "Okay" and they made their way to the Gryffindor tower.

Hermione's room was warm and welcoming, but there weren't many places where two people could sit close enough to read a diary together. There was only one chair, which she kept at her study desk, and her window seat could only fit one person. That only left her bed, which was big enough to hold an army troop, but was she ready to sit on that bed alone with Harry? Oh, Merlin, was she thinking like a fool!

She'd been on a bed with Harry countless times in their friendship, why would now be any different? Because she was in love with him? Bloody hell! She'd always been in love with him, so what was different now? Absolutely nothing.

With this resolve, she sat at the head of her bed with her legs crossed Indian style, leaving quite a bit of space on her side so that Harry could sit close to her, but not dangerously so. He did so, laying down with his head on one of her fluffy pillows, his body stretched out and his legs crossed at the ankle.

There, same as always, they both thought, trying to ignore the physical tension.

Shaking her head, Hermione began to read.

September 1

Today, I came back to Hogwarts for my fifth year, but my excitement was considerably dampened today. Not only because of what happened with James last year (I still can't believe I actually KISSED HIM!), but my worry still lies with him.

I've had visions this summer. Of course, the werewolf, and the Marauders with the animals were still there, but this summer a new one haunted me, full of pain and despair. And it was eerily clear. I think my vision came as the event was happening, if it was happening.

And it was a vision I had while I was awake, therefore stronger than others. It sent me into a trance for quite a long time, worrying my parents to death.

It showed me James, despairing, howling in pain, crying out to people as an estate burned in front of him. He called out to his parents, to his sister, telling them that he would avenge them, telling them that he wouldn't let them down. Sirius was there, holding him back from possibly running head first into the flames, as he angrily shouted at the Black Mark that glowed above, brighter than the flames, his mouth releasing threats and curses and angered shouts. And he

cried, horrible, thick, desperate tears that couldn't be held back and couldn't sooth him or appease him in any way.

And I felt it all. His anger, his despair, the sorrow for the little girl that would never live to see Hogwarts, or buy her first wand, or receive her first kiss. The mourning for his parents and all those of his kin.

I don't know how he made it out, but he was the only one left.

I didn't see James on the Hogwarts Express, or heading toward the horseless carriages, but I saw him at the Sorting Ceremony. He was there, with the rest of the Marauders, saluting the new Gryffindors, talking, joking, eating, and laughing. But when he turned and saw me...I don't know what he must have thought, but he became sad, and then angry (at himself I think) and turned away from me. But his eyes were empty, and they had been so even before his sudden change of mood. I'm afraid my vision was true. His family is gone. Dead.

We didn't speak at all tonight.

They read of how, for days, James avoided her, of how, the day after their return, she tried to speak to him, and he ran off with weak excuses.

I had another vision of James and their animals, this time different. Instead of being at the Whomping Willow, they were in front of the Shrieking Shack in Hogsmeade. Remus, Sirius, and Peter weren't there anymore, but the wolf, the dog, and the mouse were, and they were all looking at James expectantly.

He turned to me, and gave me the saddest of smiles, then, he turned back to his deer, next to him as always, and melted into the creature until there was no more James, he'd bonded with the deer that was now looking at me the same way James had been. And then the deer stood on its hind legs, turning up to scream at the full moon, before running off in Hogsmeade followed by the rest of animals.

I can't be sure of its meaning, but it scares me, most of all because, when I woke up in the middle of the night, a full moon watched me sympathetically from outside the window.

James's avoidance of her had lasted now a whole of five weeks, and Lily was becoming dangerously worried. Finally, one day, she managed to get him alone after classes and before lunch, set on confronting him.

He looked upset, but I wasn't going to let this stupid game play on until we became total strangers. "Are you upset with me because I kissed you?" I didn't think that was the case, but I wanted to know about that, too.

He shook his head slowly and said in a quiet monotone, "No." I'd never heard James speak like that before. So empty of life and vitality. So unlike him, who shone as brightly as the sun with the vivacity of someone who blessed every breath his life permitted him to take.

But I shook my head to clear my mind. "Why are you avoiding me?" Oh, Merlin! Why did I have to say it with such a depressed, beaten voice? Okay, yes, his avoidance of me was driving me mad, but he didn't need to acknowledge it any more than he already certainly did.

He stared at me for a long time, and I was afraid I might have offended him in some way.

"Because," he finally spoke, "I hate it that when you look at me I don't feel so mad and angry anymore," and that was all he had to say.

Maybe it was because I always defended him, and helped him when he was in need, but I was a soothing presence in his life, and that hindered his chance at hating whatever had—now I was certain—killed his family and left him an orphan full of hatred.

I couldn't say anything after that, because the words to sooth him hadn't been invented yet, so I wrapped my arms around his tall lanky frame and held him close to me. He wouldn't hold me in return, at least not right away, but soon I felt him shaking in my embrace, and as he began crying, he held onto me so tightly that it felt as though I

was his only link to his sanity, and he began to sob. Loud, uncontained sobs of someone who has nothing left in the world but this and his wish to bring peace to his family who was gone.

And as I held him, I made a promise to myself, that I am now leaving in this diary in proof of my determination. I'm going to make him live again. I'm going to bring the light back into his eyes and let him know that he's not alone, and that, even if he doesn't love me, even if he had a girlfriend now, I'll always love him, and I'll always be there for him to bring that life loving smile of his back to his face.

But as I held him, I had the horrible sense of foreboding that sometimes washed over me, and it was telling me that we, both of us, and probably together, would die at the hands of Voldemort, the Dark Lord.

But, even if that is the case, I don't care. As short as our lives will be (hopefully not that short) I promise onto everything that is holy and important in my life that I will make him live the life that most would not achieve in thousands of years.

I promise.

Harry and Hermione were quiet for a long time, marvelling at the selfless love she had for James, at how she wished for him to be happy no matter what, despite the fact that he already had someone to love him (although, to Harry and Hermione, it felt as though he'd become Kiana's boyfriend simply to avoid Lily).

And in the thoughtful silence the SLAM of Ron opening the portrait hole while pushing it open hard enough to make it bang and nearly crack against the wall nearly produced the couple residing the room a good stroke.

Sauntering in, he made his way to the bed and threw himself down with a contented sigh.

"And why are you here?" Hermione asked icily in a way of greeting. She was really getting annoyed at how Ron always barged in at the most inopportune time, interrupting cathartic moments that she

wished she could treasure without the memory of him yelling, or banging doors, or sighing deeply while looking like the love sick puppy he was.

Her question brought Ron, slightly, back to his senses. "Training's going to start soon," he told them in reply.

Oh. Harry and Hermione had practically forgotten about that. Not that they didn't enjoy watching Dumbledore as he taught them how to ward off Death Eater spells and counter curses and the like while using Snape as a demonstration dummy. They were just wrapped up in other things to remember.

Neither of the two was really listening to the entire enthralling retelling of Ron's first kiss with Krista, but when he moved on to the second, third, fourth, fifth, and on, Harry started to get a little annoyed. He grabbed the pillow behind his head and whacked Ron's freckled nose with it. The red head sputtered an indignant "Hey!", and reached for two pillows, one which he used for Harry, the other for Hermione.

Needless to say, this instigated an all out pillow fight. Laughs, giggles, and harmless taunts were thrown around amongst the feathers ripping out of the cushions, as the threesome enjoyed their, now, fully mended friendship.

A particularly strong whacking from Harry's pillow threw Ron off balance, and he fell on top of Hermione, while she laughed and punched him and called him a pervert. Harry fell back on the bed laughing next to her, and Ron jumped at the opportunity that had presented itself to him.

"Wrong guy, Mione, I'm already taken," he called out laughing, and pulling himself up, grabbed Harry and pushed him on top of her.

The couple stopped laughing instantly, and, despite the fact that Harry seemed to be frozen to the spot, their eyes wondered everywhere, but tried desperately not to stray onto each other's faces.

Harry was glad for Ron's presence, because his barely restrained giggles gave him enough sense to push off and say, "Let's go to training."

And this stopped even Ron's laughter.

Yep, he realized, something definitely had passed on between the two the previous night. But what? Neither of them seemed ready to speak yet, and they probably wouldn't for a very long time either.

He walked the halls several paces ahead of them, trying to give them the privacy they needed, but he was pretty sure it was to no avail.

Behind him, their silence was deafening, to the two of them most of all. Hermione kept on fidgeting, trying to gather the courage to take his hand for the length of the walk, but never managing to. She kept on chastening herself, saying that she'd held his hands plenty of times, but the look on Harry's face as he was sprawled on top of her, and the pain, etched into his feature after he'd torn his lips away from hers a few hours prior kept on haunting her.

"Why did you break it off with Krum?" Harry asked suddenly out of the blue. In front of them, Ron accidentally jammed his toe against one of the steps as his step faltered at Harry's question. That subject had been taboo since Hermione had first announced her break up, and made it perfectly clear that neither of them was to bring up the subject again.

Ron noted, however, that she hadn't seemed offended. After a moment's silence she spoke. "I already told you Harry, that my diary wrote of someone else at that time. I couldn't stay with him, when I was in love with another," she replied.

Harry had guessed she'd say something like that, but the question had burst out of him in the midst of his jumbled thoughts. "Who?" Doh! He was mentally jamming his head against a wall the second he'd said that. Argh! His thoughts needed to calm down. Each time a stray mental question passed his mind, his mouth got away from him.

She was surprised that he asked. She opened her mouth to speak, but closed it when no sound came out. She tried again, but the result didn't change. Why couldn't she just say it? Why couldn't she tell him that she was in love with him? Maybe this just wasn't the right time, she thought as she looked at Ron ahead of her.

Finally, she spoke. "I'm...not ready to say it...yet," she concluded.

Harry knit his eyebrows but nodded in understanding. "Okay," he mumbled. "I'm sorry," he apologized for prying.

She felt the compelling need to explain herself. "I'm afraid I'm not good enough for him."

Harry looked at her in surprise. "Hermione," he started, "you're the best." He told her. "Whoever he is, you're too good for him. And if he doesn't realize that he's a prat," he told her.

She didn't say anything, only turned her gaze to the floor and kept walking behind Ron. I know that you're too good for me, he told her with his mind, but she didn't hear him.

To be continued.

Author's note: I received a lot of complaints about Ron being evil in my story. I'm sorry, it was not my intention to make him seem so. I tried to write him off as bitter of what Harry and Hermione were developing, and scared of ending up to be the third wheel, but apparently I failed. I'm sorry, but I hope he's redeeming himself in your eyes now.

Any comments, constructive criticism, or flames welcome at [http://www.fanfiction.net](#), or simply leave a review at [http://www.fanfiction.net](#). Go ahead, I'll just have a BBQ.

Thank you

Pearl

Every parent leaves something behind for their children to remember them by. Lily Evans didn't know, when she left her diary behind, that it would help her son into knowing her and did she?

Oh, my God! I have like SEVENTY REVIEWS! I can't believe it! I thought I'd have maybe 40 for the whole completed story, and we're only like a third through so far! Anyway, I'm quite proud of myself for getting this out so quickly (considering I only had about six hours total between work and my family, we're 5, so computer time gets kind of chopped up) but I truly, seriously believe this chapter's absolute crap. And book five is coming out ! No! Anyway, like I said I have things planned for the order of the phoenix, but since it won't come up till Chapter 8, I'll tell you basically what mine will be about. Basically, it's just an organization that looks out for Voldie, finds his possible victims and gives them a hiding place till they're cleared. Keep that in mind when you read future chapters and please try to ignore anything that might happen in book 5 to change the plot of MY story. Anyway, like I said, this is real crap, but since my comp time is practically up I'm going to post this without even reading through it again. When I have time I'll come back and re edit, but for now please be patient. Thank you. And thanks to the wonderful reviewers. ^_^

Disclaimer: I own nothing. Since that's over with: on with the fic:

Harry Potter and the Knowledge of a Mother

Chapter 6: Truths and confrontations

Harry and Hermione were completely absorbed in a rather lovely study session in the library in sight of their not-so-far-off N.E.W.T.s during that grey windy mid December day when they noticed Ron sauntering in the way he'd been wont to do after one of his hallway run-ins with Krista. They both did notice, however, when they looked up at his beaming freckled face, that he seemed even more pleased than usual.

Knowing fully well what was coming, they both placed their quills down after finishing the sentence, crossed their arms over the study desk's hard surface and waited for the redhead to announce whatever new romantic revelation had hit him. They watched in

silence as he sat down across from them without bothering to get his school things out, crossed his arms in front of him, and simply beamed at them.

This must have been a particularly good revelation, if he was so itching to say out loud, but exited enough to make their friends guess.

Not that his friends cared all that much for Krista Perril's exiting everyday conversation (the word-for-word retelling interesting them even less) but they'd long ago learned to humour the most temperamental third of their group.

Finally, after much staring (and after Hermione was sure that Ron's cheek muscles must have frozen in place from all that incessant grinning) she spoke up, annoyed. "Are we going to sit like this all day, or are you finally going to let us get back to our studying after your wonderfully loquacious recounting of Krista Perril's romantic phrasings?"

At this Ron grinned even wider. "I'm going to be away this Christmas. I'm taking part of an important Chess tournament in Diagon Alley," he pronounced finally.

Both Harry and Hermione blinked confused. They had already been told of this, and that particular topic hadn't reached the list of expected ramblings.

After more blinking Hermione decided to incite him, "And?"

If Ron kept grinning like that his face was going to split in two. "And Krista's coming with me," he told them enthusiastically, completely ignoring Madame Pince's reprimanding shush.

Oh, now it made sense. "Glad to hear it Ron, but what will your parents say?"

Ron shrugged. "Ginny agreed to tell them that Krista's coming with her as a friend," he shrugged again. "Don't care so long as she comes," he decided finally and his friends went back to congratulating him a little more, and, after concluding that Ron had been adulated

enough, simultaneously picked up their quills to go back to their essays.

The redhead watched the pair, thinking that the two had been spending way too much time together, by now they were probably sharing brains, which for Harry would be a good thing when the N.E.W.T.s rolled around, but they didn't seem too happy to only be studying together in the moments in which they weren't glued to Lily's diary (both he and Hermione had taken to using her first name). "What are you doing for Christmas?" He asked, not wanting to get into study mode yet (not that he ever would be in actual study mode). The question might have seemed directed at both, but since it was common knowledge that Harry wouldn't go back to the Dursleys unless he had absolutely no choice (and after meeting them on their way to King's Cross they finally understood why), it was an understatement that Hermione was the only one in need to answer.

She looked at him, and then at Harry, wondering if she should tell them what she was about to, but, figuring that they would find out anyhow, she decided to tell them. "Well, my parents are going to an orthodontists' convention in Hawaii," Ron gawked at her at this point, "but I decided to stay here instead, you know, give them a good vacation of their own," she finished offhandedly with every intention of going back to her essay.

Ron had other plans however. "WHAT?!" He screeched loudly, getting another reprimand from Madam Pince and just about the rest of the Hogwarts population littering the library. He didn't acknowledge them, yet lowered his volume to a decent tone anyway. "But it's Hawaii!" He exclaimed. She shrugged, and his mouth dropped open in shock. "You have a chance to get away from this icy hell and get your arse tanned in bloody HAWAII, and you're staying HERE?!" His screeches were at least whispered this time.

She shrugged again. "So, I'll have plenty of chances to go there on my own after I graduate," she shrugged yet another time.

"But it's Hawaii!" Ron repeated his whispered screech.

This time Hermione chose to ignore him and focus on her essay. She found it rather hard, however, when Harry was looking at her confused, and maybe even a little dismayed.

o*o

Harry was sitting alone in the common room after hours, waiting for Hermione to be back from her inspection rounds completely set in the decision of clearing out what had transpired in the library, so when she stepped through the portrait hole and saluted her he stated: "You knew about him leaving for Christmas," in way of greeting. He'd said it matter- of- factly, as a statement, rather than as a question.

She stood looking at him quietly for a while, wondering what he could possibly think of the truth he'd just spoken. "Yes," she replied uncertainly.

"And you stayed so I wouldn't be alone," he stated again. His voice was cold and expressionless, and it made her lose the certainty that she was doing the right thing in staying. Her nod was small, guilty, and even a little scared, but it communicated her determination against the idea of leaving.

Harry took a deep breath, trying to think of the best way to convince her to change her mind. The feat was already desperate when the matter at hand was of a lesser cause, but this was practically condemned to begin with. Still, he had to try. "Don't sacrifice a fun Christmas for me, Hermione. Just knowing that you care is more than enough for me," he told her, his eyes set on her, and he'd spoken the truth, it meant the world to him to know that she cared.

Hermione's eyebrows knit in determination. "It's not sacrifice, Harry," she told him, "I want to stay." In explanation she offered, "Next year I won't be here anymore."

"Yeah," Harry mumbled, looking away from her and into the crackling fire. The following year, Hogwarts wouldn't be his home anymore. What would happen then?

She made her way next to him on the couch in deep thought. "What do you plan to do?" She asked, probably on the same train of thought he'd been on.

"Find a place away from the Dursleys and start Auror training, I guess," he replied offhandedly. They were both already discussed topics. What was Hermione going to do, though? She'd never said much about the future.

"I've been accepted for training, too," she told him quietly.

He was about to reply, 'Oh, that's nice', when the words settled in his numb mind. "WHAT?!" He shouted much like Ron had done previously that day. He wasn't worried about people hearing him. Nobody would make a fuss if Harry Potter decided to become an Auror, after all, his destiny had been to fight against evil practically since he was born. Hermione Granger, smartest witch on the face of the planet, lovely Muggle born, and love of his life, however, was a different matter all together.

She shrugged, hoping to assuage Harry out of his angry stupor. "I asked to enter their research team, but I have to pass the physical training as well for it, as a precaution," she explained quietly, desperately hoping that Harry would understand. And he did.

He just wouldn't accept it.

He'd shot tons of reasons at her for changing her mind. There were other fields in which she could adapt well and make a better living for herself. There were safer situations. There were causes that needed her attention more than the Aurors.

"It's too dangerous Hermione!" He yelled finally. During his listing of better positions his voice had risen in a continuous crescendo as she kept on giving counter-reasons to back up her decision until it had been punctuated by that last shout that set her blood a boil.

Her nose her lips were swollen, her complexion red and blotchy, a muscle in her cheek twitching in anger. Harry saw it, but chose to ignore it. "Now, listen to me, Harry Potter, and listen well, for I will

only say it once, and I will not go back on my decision," her voice had started out low and with an angry quiver, but rose with every word she spoke. "I have been with you every. Bloody. Step. Of the way. I will NOT stop now. Do you understand that, Harry?!"

Her loud statement of the truth had only released the real reason for why Harry did not wish for her to go. "I don't want TO LOSE YOU!"

"YOU CAN'T!" Her final shout had been so loud that her voice had echoed off the walls of the empty room, giving a finality to her statement that couldn't be ignored and left no room for words. Only a thick, uncomfortable tension that ran between the two, leaving them with uneven breaths and dishevelled thoughts.

Harry tried several times to reply as his mouth opened and closed continuously, making him seem a fish out of water. He cleared his throat, tried again, and failed again. He tore his gaze from her. In the midst of their arguing they'd stood up in front of each other so close together that their toes were touching. It might have been intimidating while shouting, now, it was unsettling. He finally spoke, but his eyes didn't turn to her. "Look, Hermione," he began threading his fingers with hers. "I'm sorry. I know you could defeat Voldemort and all the Death Eaters on your own if you wished to, and the Bureau needs you, but I don't know what I'd do if something were to happen to you," he admitted finally, terrified to realize that his voice was now raspy and as shaky as the fingers that held hers, a thick lump in his throat making his breathing difficult.

Her vision blurred as the truth that she already knew was revealed, but she had to make him see. "Harry," her voice quivered even more than his, "I risk just as much, if not more, just sitting and waiting for a Death Eater to come and get me. I'm Muggleborn," she reminded him. It hurt to say the obscenity, but it was true. Harry deserved better.

"You're the best witch alive, Hermione," he told her, giving her hand a gentle squeeze, making her look at him. "Your blood has nothing to do with it. It's all mind and heart," and the sentence was just as final as Hermione's previous shout.

They didn't know how, but they ended up kissing again. It wasn't passionate or mind blowing or ground shaking, or at least it wasn't meant to. It was meant to be reassuring from one to the other and back, yet the ground shook just a little, and their mind had been only slightly winded, or so they told themselves. It was long lingering and sweet, and both of them treasured the moment because they knew, as though it were a mutual agreement, that it would both ignored it had ever happened.

As they parted with a gentle goodnight and reached their beds they both understood that they had needed that kiss just as much-if not, more-than the one that had anticipated it, but neither was ready to face what it could bring, for as things were at the moment, they were safe, and there was already so much change ahead of them. They didn't need to change what they had just yet.

And, with those lies they had taught themselves over the last few months they warred the night for sleep, losing their battle and hours of rest.

o*o

As Harry and Hermione expected, they had been the only two Gryffindors left in Hogwarts for the holydays. There were reasons for this, of course. The students didn't feel safe knowing that the infestation of the Quidditch field might be growing with the help of Ciccibello. Many wanted a rest from the aforementioned satanic doll. Others, mostly Muggle born students, didn't wish to stay among the wizarding folk during that period of the year. And there was, of course, the matter that destiny was desperately trying to push them in a direction that, they'd both realized, weren't ready to undertake quite yet. Too many things were stopping them.

So that left the two of them, with other thirteen peers, sharing the same table for the holiday meals. Three Ravenclaws, four Hufflepuffs, and six Slytherins. One of those just happened to be Malfoy, even if it seemed that his missing lackeys hadn't followed their boss quite as much in the school term as they might have earlier years.

In all honesty, they didn't give a bloody who was there. They'd managed to not spend too much time one with the other (not that they were openly ignoring one another, no), but what now, when there would be only the two of them in the common room or on any other Gryffindor ground? Spending the holiday as hermits didn't seem like a great idea to either of the two, so they just went on with things as usual, acting as though things had never changed. How was it that so far only Krista and Ron had caught on? Must have been just one of life's mysteries, they guessed.

In any case, they were now seated at the table, two brave lonely Gryffindors, being squared by six Slytherins who so hated the both of them.

This was prospecting to be a wonderful Christmas.

Thankfully, one of the Ravenclaws, and a Hufflepuff, were Quidditch players, so, involving both Harry, and, when possible, Malfoy-hostile as he might have been-they managed to get a pretty civilized conversation going, centred around the aforementioned sport.

One of the Hufflepuffs, at a certain point, managed to steer the conversation onto Ginny Weasley, since Harry and Hermione were both so close to her. "She was going out with one of my mates, but she up broke with him right before leaving for holiday and now he's into one of those 'I hate all women' crisis," he explained. He was obviously going to ask for advice, or at least their opinion, but he was interrupted by a sneering voice.

"Serves him right for shagging a Weasley," there was no need to clarify who the sneer might have belonged to. Malfoy.

"Actually, she wouldn't shag him," the Hufflepuff countered.

"What a prude!" Was Malfoy's huffed reply.

Another annoyed voice joined the conversation. "She happens to be in love with someone else," Hermione spit at him.

He huffed. "Right," he mumbled sarcastically. Hermione, however, detected the jealousy and uncertainty in his voice.

"He's a Slytherin," she decided to explain, "she tries to forget him with other boys, but when things get deep she feels guilty and turns back," she finished sadly. She herself had done much the same thing when she'd discovered her true feelings for Harry.

Malfoy's face became an ugly purple sneer. "She should!" He snapped, referring to Ginny Weasley's attempt at forgetting the Mystery Slytherin. "No Slytherin would ever get with a Gryffindor. Much less that one," there was so much venom in his voice that Hermione felt a quiver of fear overrun her spine. But she knew better. She guessed that was just his way of dealing with such matters.

Crossing her arms over her chest and wearing a mask of defiance she let him know exactly what she thought of his childish behaviour, and it didn't take much at all to do that. "If I didn't know you better," she began, "I'd say you were jealous, Malfoy."

He didn't reply, but she noticed that his left eyebrow was twitching in anger. He just stood and left without a word or a look back. The rest of the Slytherins looked ready to pounce on Hermione for what she'd said, so Harry took her wrist and half dragged her towards the library with an unnecessary, "Lets go."

They reached the library a short time later and went to the secluded table where they had left their studying supplies, along with Lily's diary, before heading to lunch. Hermione had a tall stack of books piled up, most of them-strangely enough-seemed to be about Divination. Walking around the table to sit next to the Leaning Tower of Books she pushed the diary toward Harry. "You read for now, Harry," she commended, "I have something I want to check into," she explained. It had been a while that one of Lily's premonitions had been tugging at the back of her mind. It was the one about the boy with the lightning shaped squiggle on his forehead-Harry, there was no doubt of that-and his light. It just sounded so familiar, and she knew it was of great importance, but she just couldn't remember where else she might have read something of the sort.

Harry wasn't too happy of the idea of reading the diary himself, he'd gotten so used to Hermione's voice retelling his mother's thoughts that it would seem strange to him otherwise. However, he shrugged. He knew very well that when she began a research nothing was to get in her way. Least of all: him.

One of the very first entries that he read was another one of "Lightning Boy" as she'd playfully begun to call him, and, immediately, Hermione dropped her quill and gave Harry her full attention, hoping for something more, some other clue to indicate where she had to take her research, but to no avail. This vision had even less details than the ones before it. Maybe it was because it regarded the future, and not the present or past-as most of the others seemed to-but her visions of Harry were not very clear at all.

Many of the other entries were regarding Jenna and the help that she was lending Lily in the dealing of James and his jealous girlfriend Kiana (who had figured out almost instantly that she wasn't the first in James's heart). Hermione listened only half heartedly as she was pouring over the tomes discussing a topic she cared absolutely nothing about. She was thankful that Lily, despite her powers, had not taken Divination as one of her subjects. Maybe her "Inner Eye" told her ahead of time what a crock that course actually was.

An interesting retelling came up after a Prefects' Meeting in which Lily had an argument over James Potter with one Severus Snape. Recently, he'd been popping up a lot more in her diary.

I don't know, exactly, why Severus is so set against James, but today he spoke things that made me doubt someone that I thought I would never doubt. I know what he said is not true, but I can't help but wonder.

It all started right after the meeting was over and we were heading back to our Common Rooms. Even if they are on opposite sides of the school, strangely enough we had a long path to walk together, and so we filled up the time with distant cold conversation. We are of opposite houses, after all.

When he steered the conversation onto James, I knew he was going to say something horrible about him, he always does, but when he called him a criminal I saw red.

I yelled at him there, in the middle of the hall, uncaring if it was deserted or not (thank God it was), and I gave him quite the piece of my mind of what I thought of James and of him. I told him he didn't know anything about James, what he was like or what he thought or even who he was. All he knew was the prankster that liked to torture Slytherins for fun. Like they didn't do the same to us.

I think I was yelling, but I couldn't be sure, all I know is that when I was done (quite a while later) my throat was hoarse and he looked unscathed. I'm sure he's aware of what I feel for James (he even said he saw me the night I kissed him, and the time he cried in my arms over the loss of his family) and he probably thinks that I'm blinded because of them.

For a while he didn't say anything. Then, "I wonder if your trust in him is so well placed."

I don't know how, but my voice was hard and icy when I replied him. "Oh, believe me, Severus. It is."

"Do you, by any chance know where he disappears every month with the rest of his followers?"

That stopped me in my tracks. My visions had given me indications of where he might be, or even what he might be doing, but their meaning was still eluding me, probably because I'm not ready to face it. I know James isn't a criminal, but I can't prove it to Snape. I shook my head no.

He repeated that maybe my trust was badly placed and walked off, leaving me with these doubts that are plaguing me. Where is it that James goes, and what does he do? Why can't he tell me? And why, for the love of him, does he come back with scratches and bruises?

I wish I knew.

Harry and Hermione were quiet for a few seconds, and then Hermione spoke. "As scary as the thought may be, Harry," she ventured, "Snape sounds interested in your mom."

A visible shudder coursed through Harry's body. "That is scary!" He exclaimed, but then knit his eyebrows in thought. "But it can't be," he said mostly to himself. "I don't think he'd hate me so much if he did."

"Think about it, Harry," Hermione tried to reason. "You're your father's portrait. What if he didn't hate your father because of what happened at the Shrieking Shack, but because your mom loved him regardless?" She asked in thought. Why did she always have to make such sound assumptions.

Harry desperately tried to find a fault in her reasoning. "You don't think that's possible, right?" He asked, knowing that she wouldn't have brought it up if she hadn't thought it a probability.

"I don't know, it's plausible," she mumbled, "but why would he have turned Death Eater if he fancied a Muggle Born? It doesn't make sense under that aspect."

Harry's face lit up at that. "Good!" He exclaimed. "I don't like that idea."

A new voice broke in. "How can you know Snape's a Death Eater?" They turned to see Draco Malfoy looking at them curiously. How long had he been standing there?

"He WAS," Hermione corrected, "but we're not sure if he still is," she explained.

"I don't think he does either," he replied.

"Why?" Harry asked.

"He can still be saved," Malfoy said enigmatically, "unlike others."

"Are you talking about your parents, or yourself?" Hermione asked, interest seriously piqued by the argument.

"Does it make a difference?" He'd sounded almost hopeless when he'd asked that.

"It does if you write to Ginny," Hermione replied. Harry looked at her askance, and Malfoy left wordlessly for the second time in only a few hours. She hoped he would write that letter.

To be continued. Author's note: Haha, thought I'd forgotten about D/G, huh? Anyway, I don't think I have any particular ramblings this time, so I'll just tell you that in the next chap Draco does write that letter, Lily's sixth year and a ball, and Harry and Hermione actually say WHY they're so afraid to get together. Will they do anything about it? Read and find out. Anyway, liked it, hated it, wanna flame me? Go ahead, I'll have a BBQ. Just let me know what you think at or simply leave a review. Thanks Love, Pearl

Every parent leaves something behind for their children to remember them by. Lily Evans didn't know, when she left her diary behind, that it would help her son into knowing her and himself...or did she?

Thanks again every one for the great reviews. See, the reason why I didn't expect so many is because, previously, whenever I was truly excited about the prospect of writing a story it usually ended up as a big flop (like On the Wings of the Tiger, my Ranma fic, which I had to put on the backburner after the second chapter because it only got 9 reviews total). I didn't expect anything more than that out of Koam, but you guys were wonderfully supportive and now the reviews just keep on rolling in. Thank You! I love you all so much. *sniff sniff* I think I'm going to cry. Oh, and Erenriel...what the hell was that about? ME writing a "Snape-is-Harry's-father" fic? I think you haven't figured me out yet. EWWW! The thought is just sick. Anyway, this is another sappy, tearjerker, crappy chapter from your truly. And now: on with the fic.

Harry Potter and the Knowledge of a Mother

Chapter 7: Letters, memories, and fears

Draco Malfoy laid sprawled on his oversize green and silver bed in the Slytherin dormitories, his hands behind his head cradling it, his feet crossed at the ankles and a thoughtful look upon his face. He gave a cursory glance to the expensive parchment that lay to his side completely blank, a quill in hand and inkbottle nearby and open, but put safely enough to avoid any possible spills. His dorm mates were all either still in the common room exchanging banter, or in the Great Hall stuffing their faces. In any case, it suited his situation perfectly, for he needed to be alone to figure out what to write and didn't wish to be interrogated by any stupid bloke that might want to do just that.

When Granger, earlier that day, had said that writing to Ginny might have been able to save him...well, she made it seem a lot easier than what it actually was. First of all, he had absolutely not the faintest idea of what to speak to her about, after all, they were of different houses, different years, different social circles and statuses, different hair colours, different heights...what the bloody was he going on in

his mind? True, they did lead very different lives, but it wasn't as though they had never exchanged an actual conversation.

No, the problem was of a different order.

Now...how was he supposed to put the heading of the blasted thing?

It wasn't like he could start with "Dear Ginny"! For one, it was totally uncalled for, since they only had a passable acquaintance to one another, which brought him—for the nth time that night—to the question: 'Why was he even bothering?' But he soon dispelled the thought. Their...encounters had not been hostile since his fifth year, but 'Dear' was just never going to appear on one of his letters, to her or anyone else for that matter! It just wasn't his style! Not only was he a Malfoy, he was a Slytherin as well! 'Dear' was definitely not the term.

So then what else to use?

He tried to wrack his brain, searching through the memories of the different times they spoke to one another, trying to remember if he'd ever—even by chance---called her with any kind of non-offensive nickname, or if she'd ever given him any indication of having one, and, somehow, he ended up having a full blown flashback of the time they had first argued for something that hadn't been petty and had managed to get him thinking.

It had been the first session in Duel Training, back in his fifth year. Every one from fourth year and up had to participate, and it had been the same way since. Dumbledore, who taught the 'class' with the help of the head of Slytherin house, Severus Snape, had tried pairing up students for the first few sessions since the sheer amount of pupils created an unimaginable amount of chaos, and, by some crazy twist of fate, Draco Malfoy had been paired up with Ginny Weasley.

Draco took it as an insult, and gave one to the redhead before him, who retaliated more than happily, thing which he had not been expecting. She always looked so sweet and cheerful around her friends, that hearing such language spewing forth from her mouth like water out of a broken pipe had totally taken him by surprise. Yes, she

was a Weasley, and therefore, grew up with six older males to teach her all their knowledge (most of which probably came from Fred and George), but the amount of such knowledge was rather astonishing.

But of course, in a Battle of Barbs, Draco Malfoy was not one to pull back, and so he spewed in much the same manner she did, and they went so for a good half hour. The only difference between the two had been that she had whispered in a hiss all her taunts and comebacks—which was even more annoying—while he was shouting them to the four winds.

Therefore, Snape and Dumbledore only heard Malfoy's half of the interview between the two, and it hadn't sounded good. He had gotten a proper ear washing from the both of them in front of more than half the school, and it had lasted more than anyone would have wished it to.

When he turned away from the mentors (that had finished embarrassing him to death) and to Ginny, he found her with a thoughtful expression that he felt was worse than a Cheshire smirk.

"What now, Weasley?" He spat the question at her.

She was quiet for a moment, looking as though she was pitying him. "You know?" she started. "Your jealousy of Harry and your father's position with the Death Eaters aren't good reasons to become one yourself," maybe she'd figured out that half of his barbs had been laced with terms associated with the Dark Lord.

Still, he was dazed. "What?" He spat again.

She shrugged. "If that's not reason enough for you," she began taking an intimidating step toward him, "my brother Percy did a very thorough research of your family tree," he raised his eyebrows in sceptical questioning, "your maternal grandfather was born from an affair between a Wizard and a Muggleborn. Your blood is not as pure as you always thought it to be. Isn't it a bit stupid to hate those that are in ways like yourself?"

After that Draco didn't remember much at all about that training session, only that their arguing had stopped there and they had actually started practising what Dumbledore was teaching. Startlingly enough, he found his hand moving of its own volition (after having skipped the heading), retelling the flashback that he'd just had, and the conversation with Potter and Granger only a few hours prior.

Then in closing, before his name, he wrote: "Do you think I can be saved?" Then went back to the heading and started it as: "Hey, Weasel Jr," which, he knew, she would not—probably—find offensive (at least not after everything else he wrote).

Ginny recieved the letter quite some time later, but when she did, many thoughts ran through her mind, most of which were memories of their encounter since that faithful one he had described in his parchment. She found herself smiling at the closing statement.

In reply she wrote:

"Hey, ferret head,

if you're asking yourself that, than you're already half way to salvation.

The rest is up to you.

Ginny

Her, rather brief, message reached him within the same night, and reading it, he smirked. "No," his smirked grew into a full blown grin. "It's up to you."

o*o

Harry sat in the common room next to Hermione, trying to breach the subject after an unaccountable amount of trials, he gave up and decided to ask her outright.

"What was that thing with Malfoy and Ginny the other day? How did you know that writing to Ginny would 'save' him?"

Hermione seemed a bit surprised, as his question just seemed to pop out of the blue, but she answered nonetheless. "She and I are in similar situations, so it's only natural that we confide in each other," she replied, the sides of her lips quirking up in a failed attempt at a reassuring smile.

Harry didn't process that right, though. "You're in love with a Slytherin?" He nearly screeched. Whoever he was he would kill him!

Hermione laughed outright in surprise. She'd expected him to get it after all the time they'd spent skirting around each other. "No," she sobered, "but loving him would ruin everything," and that was true.

Harry stared at her. "Who is he?" He hadn't realised he'd spoken till he saw her eyebrows knit.

She simply stared at him.

"Sorry," he apologised, realising he was making her uncomfortable, "I shouldn't pry."

"No!" Hermione nearly shouted. "No," she blushed quietly, catching herself, "you have every right...but I'm...afraid of your reaction," she explained.

He could relate to that. "It's ok," he told her. "You don't have to tell me until you're ready."

She smiled that smile at him. The smile that seemed to grow on her face on its own volition, the one that seemed to light her from the inside out, the smile that made him realise he was in love with her what seemed like an eternity ago. "Thanks," she replied quietly, and, realising the conversation was over, opened Lily's diary to the point that they had left off at and began to read out loud.

Since it was vacation and there was nobody there, they were moving rather speedily across Lily's past. They had already read of Lily's excitement at the idea of the Solar Crowning Ball (to celebrate the eclipse that Hogwarts would see the day of the ball, an important event for Wizards), and of Snape asking her to be his date (which

Harry found rather repulsive). He'd asked her as they had stepped out of a Prefects' meeting and right in front of one of the portraits known only for its hunger for gossip. Soon enough the whole school had found out, James included.

Before that, he and Lily had already had a pretty horrible fight about his girlfriend Kiana, who was making life hell for Lily, which had ended up in James telling her that he loved Lily and then running off before awaiting an answer. The following day he'd apologised, saying that he was nervous and taking it all back. She'd been hurt, but hadn't countered it with any of her feelings for him, because, honestly, they scared her.

Now, they were reading to know how James would react to the news of Severus Snape, his worst enemy, trying to put the moves on Lily Evans, the girl that he did not wish to admit he loved.

I was making my rounds when I ran into James, who had obviously been looking for me because he would never be caught unaware out of bed after hours. I'm sure he was heading to the Whomping Willow.

He was angry because of Snape's proposal to take me to the Ball, like everyone else, as a matter of fact.

We ended up arguing.

"You can't go with him!" He shouted after a long yelling session.

I was so angry with him at the time that I found myself screaming at him. "WHY NOT?"

Then his voice dropped to a hissing whisper. "Because I know you." His eyes were so intense in that one singular moment, that I felt like breaking down in tears. I could read everything he felt and thought while he looked at me, and I don't think I was ready for that yet. And then, there was always the thought of Kiana that screamed at me.

She hated me, and I don't care at all for her, but she loves James. It was the thought of her that made me deny James's statement, despite the fact that nothing truer had every been spoken. "NO!" My

shout sounded more like a sob, and I found myself against the wall, his arms on either side of me, almost supporting me, and an expression of defiance marking his features.

"Yes," he contradicted me, still with that hissing whisper, although at the moment, it sounded like a wounded sob. "Because you're like me," he added. Oh, God! How was I supposed to retaliate to that.

As much as I wanted to admit it, I denied it. "No, I'm not," but I found myself staring at a statue off to the side.

He was quiet for a long time, and I wanted to look at him, to read him, to know what he was thinking and feeling, but I refused to. I felt his hand under my chin, turning me to face him. I was terrified. "If you want me to believe that," he started, this time whispering without the hiss, "tell it to my face."

I tried several times. A bunch of choked "I—I..." escaped my mouth but nothing else, and I found myself crying. "I can't," I told him truthfully.

"Because you love me," Oh, God! He was so sure of it!

"How would you know that?" I should have spat at him, spoken the words in self righteous anger, because I should have felt as though his statement was nothing but arrogant, but it wasn't, and I didn't, I spoke softly and with absolutely no malice. It was true, and James wouldn't ever shove it back into my face just for personal satisfaction.

"Because I know," he stated again. His fingers were tracing my face so gently, as though I was something precious, and more tears came to my eyes. "I know you. You're like me. You love me." He repeated. "And I love you."

I think that time, I was the one who kissed. I did it because he was so close, and I felt so safe in his arms, and so desired, and so loved. And because I loved him, and I loved the love that he had for me and for my feelings. I love James Potter, and so I kissed him. I had forgotten about Kiana. Staying with James would only hurt her more

for his heart was already mine, but I pulled away when I remember where I thought he was heading.

"I do love you," I admitted, and he looked so happy that I just wanted to forget everything wrong in my life and go back to kissing him, but I couldn't. "But I can't trust you, James. You're keeping too many secrets from me," telling him hurt like nothing else, but I had to say or gradually shred my sanity to bits.

He looked stricken. I think he'd wanted to tell me, for a while now maybe, but I don't think he thought it right. "I'd give them to you," his words were hushed, meaningful, but I already knew what he was going to say, and found myself boiling over with self righteousness. "But they aren't mine to give out."

I knew that was coming, but still... "Oh, right! The Marauders," I'd said the last words like it was something vile and disgusting even though I knew it was wrong. They were his friends, his links to sanity since the loss of his family, but I felt that my love should have meant enough for him to tell me, even if, now, I know it couldn't be any other way.

He was hurt by my tone, but he understood my point of view, so he pushed himself away from me, disentangling his limbs from mine, and spoke the words as though they were atrocious. "Yes," he confirmed, "I have to go now."

"Fine," I spat, still boiling in anger, "go to your date with the Whomping Willow." He looked back at me in shock and surprise, and I could see the gears in his head working to figure out if he'd done anything to give it away. Maybe I shouldn't have, but the anger was clouding my mind, so I told him about the dreams I'd been having, all of the dreams that had to do with the Marauders and the Wolf and the full moon and the Whomping Willow and the Shrieking Shack. I shouldn't have told him, because now I have no secret, and I should have feared his reaction, but he wasn't scared of me, and didn't shun me.

"You already know all my secrets," then my dreams were truly visions that represented a truth that, I'm afraid, I'm beginning to come to.

Still, I lost some of my anger, and spoke a little more softly. "I want you to tell me, though," it was true, if he thought I already knew, I'd rather hear the words out of his mouth, not only to get everything straight, but to know that he trusts me as much as I trust him.

I think he knew what I was feeling, because this time, he was the one who started a kiss, and it was such a kiss that when he sat me back down to my feet (he'd lifted me up and held me around the waist so that our faces were level) I fell to my knees in a pile of mush that couldn't put two sentences together.

And then, I still can't believe it, Severus just appeared out of Merlin knows where and took off points from both of us for snogging in the halls and being out after hours. "Ah, and thank you kindly for that Whomping Willow tip, Evans," oh, Merlin, he was making me sound like an accomplice. James didn't take it that way, thankfully.

His expression hardened though. "Look all you want, you won't see anything."

I hoped he was right, either way, I told Severus that I wouldn't be his date for the ball, and James and I walked away from him and back toward the Common Room. When we turned a corner, however, he was gone, and I felt myself smiling like a beaten dog.

Since he still has a girlfriend, he couldn't ask me to the Ball, even if I sensed he wanted to.

When Hermione finished reading the entry from the diary Harry spoke, sounding as though it was a personal comment, and not an observation that he was sharing with her. "Must be wonderful."

She was confused. "What?" She asked baffled.

He looked at her as though speaking from somewhere outside of himself. "Having the certainty that the one you love feels the same way about you," he replied sadly.

Hermione stared at him for a long while, battling within and against herself on whether or not to speak. "Harry," she whispered, getting his attention.

"Hmm?"

"It's you," she supplied enigmatically.

For a second, he seemed confused, then his look changed to one of pure shock, and then to one of hope. "What?" he tried to instigate from her.

But Hermione found herself backing out. "Never mind," she answered, asking herself why the bloody hell the sorting hat ever thought of putting her in Gryffindor.

"Sure," he reassured her, but he was definitely deflated.

"But he was certain of her feelings only because they were so much alike," she tried to cheer him up with a sharp observation.

"What?" He asked again intelligently.

"Well," she began again, "he knew how she felt because he knew how he felt," she explained.

"I don't know how she feels," he told her truthfully.

"You're not like each other?" She asked with knit eyebrows.

He seemed thoughtful for a second. "I thought so," he started, changing position on the couch so that he was facing her better, "but I think we're actually more alike than we both know," he supplied. "She cares for me," he continued, "this much is obvious, but I don't know if she loves me."

"Harry," Hermione spoke his name with the sweetest of smiles painting her features, "any girl who cares about you can't help but love you," she told him. "I see it in the way they look at you," she

explained. "There's a lot more than adoration behind it."

"I don't care about them," he spat quickly, "I just want her."

"Then what do you see in her eyes when you look at her?" She asked, the words barely able to get through the huge lump that she felt at her throat.

He looked at her, looked so long and hard that she was absolutely sure he could read ever thought, every emotion, every bad thought, and every dream she'd had of him. "She does have feeling for me," he concluded finally, albeit not taking his unwavering gaze away from her.

This time she had to swallow several times before being able to reply. "Then she'd yours."

"But she's scared," he burst suddenly, propelling his face close to hers. "And I am, too," he admitted.

"Of what?" she questioned, utterly surprised by what he'd just said.

"Of my scar," he shot back quietly, as though the matter was obvious but painful, "and what I represent. Everybody expects something of me and it scares us both. It's either kill or die against Voldemort, and loving me means fighting him and risking becoming bated," he spat the last word and she gasped, throwing her hands over her mouth. "Yeah, because he's not above using those I love to get to me," he went on in explanation after hearing her gasp. "And despite how much I want her to know," Harry whispered, "I can't put her through that."

Hermione found herself taking deep even breaths in the attempt of keeping herself from crying albeit unsuccessfully. How can he be so sure? She asked herself. How can he know all that? How? But she answered herself. Because it's true. I really am scared of all that. Then a thought struck her and she managed to speak past the sobs that wanted to escape. "But when it comes down to it, are you ready to face possible death knowing you never told her?" She asked, her

voice so broken and shaky that even she could barely figure out the words.

He shook his head, a sad smile on his lips. "No," he answered. "I'd be happier knowing I never told her. If I die," Hermione gasped again at this, although she knew perfectly well it was a strong possibility, "she could move on without regret," he finished.

The tears couldn't be held anymore, and she threw herself in his arms, wishing to feel his presence comforting her, letting her know that he would be there always, no matter what. She didn't care if it was nothing but an illusion created by his warmth. She needed it.

He started to help her to her feet. "Come on, lets go to bed," he said, moving her in the direction of the dormitories.

"No," she denied, planting her feet in the spot where they were standing, hiccups escaping her at regular intervals. "No," she repeated, "I want to stay with you and read a little longer," she expressed, sniffing and hiccuping all the more, her eyes pleading him to stay and grant her that wish.

He agreed, and, after they'd sat back down and she'd regained her composure, she began to read. And reading she kept doing until they lost track of time and just lost themselves in the lives of two people in love who, at the time, couldn't be together. Snape was hot on the Marauders' tails yet wasn't getting anywhere, James had broken up with Kiana though she was still not giving up her torture of Lily and they had come to the night before the ball for which neither of the two had a companion.

This morning at breakfast, before I sat next to Jenna, James stopped in the spot where he regularly sits with the rest of the Marauders, always a little far off from the rest when they are planning something. He told me that tonight he would tell me their secret, and, when I looked at the rest of them, they all nodded in agreement, though they did look like they were all apprehensive of the matter.

Tonight was a full moon.

When I went back to my room, earlier than the rest of the students, I left my door open like James had instructed, and waited. The more time passed, the more anxious I got, and, when, suddenly, I felt something drop over my head I nearly screamed, but a gentle hand on my mouth prevented me from it.

It was James, and Peter was with me. It turned out that what he'd thrown over my head was an invisibility cloak. That's how he always managed to sneak around so much without getting caught. Rather quickly, we managed to make our way outside and to the Whomping Willow. There, right before my eyes, I saw Peter shrink and turn into the mouse from my visions. He's an animagus.

While Peter was busy hitting a knot on the base of the Whomping Willow, and opening a passage for us, James told me that he and Sirius were animagi as well, and that the passage led to the Shrieking Shack. He also told me that he, along with his friends, had made a map, a very particular one, that showed every passage that the boys had discovered in their time here and the names of the important people (of the situation) and their movements.

It was a very uncomfortable walk, cramped, damp, dark, and dirty, but at least at that point we didn't need the cape anymore. Finally after a very long time, we reached a door at the end of the stony tunnel. There we stopped.

He turned to face me, and I knew that what he'd tell me would not be pleasant. It turned out that my visions were actually rather clear.

Remus is a werewolf. He was bitten when he was only a small child, and has had to hide from others every time it was close to full moon. James and the others had found out about it in second year, and had decided to become animagi to be able to keep Remus under check in his beastly form. In fifth year, they finally managed to make it.

He explained how Remus had received permission to use the tunnel from Dumbledore so that he wouldn't hurt others, but when alone, his need for blood drove him to hurt himself. All the scary sound that the Shack is famous for were actually his howls of pain.

James also said that when he and the others were animals, Remus didn't feel like that at all. He was actually rather happy and carefree. He gave me thousands more details that I can't possibly list now, that my mind is so jumbled, but I finally felt that he trusted me, and that nothing could stand between us.

All my questions were answered, and, on the other side of the door, the wolf had smelled us and was becoming restless, we could hear him. I watched as James changed while in front of me. He became the most beautiful deer that I had ever seen in my life. I couldn't help it. I touched him, even if I knew that we didn't have time. I wanted to stay that way forever, but I couldn't, so, with the cape, I ran all the way back while I heard James holding back the door until I was clear and far away.

Now I don't know what's going on, but I do know one thing. He still didn't ask me to the dance.

Anyway, I charmed this diary so that only people who know about this secret can read it, so I feel safe that my writing it out won't endanger them.

Hermione went on to read the next day.

I hadn't slept all night from worry of what might have happened to James and the rest. They weren't at breakfast, either, and, by the time I was heading for my first class, I was so jumpy that if anyone crossed my path I might have had a stroke. Still, I couldn't tell anybody, and that's what made it worse.

I was so absorbed in thought that when I passed the statue of the one-eyed witch I didn't even notice who was standing behind it. I did notice though, when I felt myself being pulled into shadows from behind and tried to scream, only to find the same gentle hand over my mouth that I'd felt the night before.

James.

I hugged him so hard I think I broke his ribs.

He explained that the statue was actually the entrance to another passage that ended in the storeroom of Honeydukes. He gave even more details than he did last night, and when he was finished, he looked beaten. "If you don't want anything else to do with me I understand," he told me. He thought that what he was doing for Remus might have scared me away. Well, it did scare me, but it made me love him even more.

Not knowing how to reply to that, I kissed him. I think I kissed him pretty senseless, too. The look of happy confusion on his face when we pulled away was too adorable for words. He was also rather speechless.

I decided that this was a perfect opportunity. "Since you seem set in your decision to drive me mad," I started, watching as he knit his eyebrows in confusion, "I'll be the one to ask: James Potter...do you want to go to the ball with me?" I still can't believe I actually asked him that! Talk about Gryffindor bravery.

He nodded, probably still speechless. "Great!" I exclaimed and walked off to class.

The look on his face was the most priceless of my life.

So now Lily and James had finally stopped beating the bush and got their act straight, but how was this going to affect Harry and Hermione's reading? Staring into the fire the two pondered the situation, without even noticing that sleep was slowly claiming them. A short time later, the two were sitting, entwined, on the couch, fast asleep, and dreaming of each other.

To be continued.

Coming up next chapter: Ron comes back from vacation, D&G exchange...unusual X-mas presents, Harry, Ron, and Hermione receive an order from Dumbledore, and Lily has a vision of Snape at the Solar Crowning Ball.

Author's note: Well, I can't seem too help it. These kind of chapter just sort of write themselves out. Anyway, there you have it, the real

reason why H&Hr aren't getting together. They're scared. Anyway, I'm trying to get these chapters out as fast as I can, but I'm busy, and also a slow writer. I promise to do the best that I can.

Thank you

Pearl

Every parent leaves something behind for their children to remember them by. Lily Evans didn't know, when she left her diary behind, that it would help her son into knowing her and himself...or did she?

Thanks a bunch to all my reviewers again (keep them coming, they encourage me to write faster), you guys rock! Eh eh, I bet you guys didn't expect me to update so soon (even if the chapter is kind of short compared to some others)! A couple of personal notes: Issa, as of this chapter I AM going to work in the Order of the Phoenix, but it will probably be very different from the one in book 5 because I have not yet read the book, and have vowed not to do so until after I'm done with this; Usha88, I'm glad you like the story so far, and, to answer your question, the only reason I'm able such long chapters out so quickly is the simple knowledge that, once I'm finished with this baby, I can read book 5, work up new plot bunnies and get new stories out! I actually have a couple already planned out, but, this time, I'll read the book before putting them out ^_^.

On another note, I've managed to stay pretty clear of spoilers for book 5 as to not be influenced, but a couple reached me anyhow (mostly from my completely bastard family who only wishes to make me suffer), like for example, that someone dies in the book. I'd already expected that, and I always thought it would be Hagrid (don't ask why), but I've gotten hints that it might be serious himself (my mom keeps saying it's Dumbledore, but I'll believe that only when the stars shine green in a yellow sky). Anyway, if it is Sirius, well, I told you this would become somewhat of an AU, but please, don't spoil me yet. Another thing is this new character Luna (of which I know nothing except for maybe the fact that she's weird) and that my sister keeps saying she's better for Ron than Krista. Oh, well, like I care.

I hope you enjoy, and don't flame me too bad because it's starting to leave the OotP plot, k?

And now, on with the fic.

Harry Potter and the Knowledge of a Mother

Chapter 8: Haunting kisses

As Ginny Weasley made her way to through the school searching for two of the most famous students presently frequenting Hogwarts—otherwise known as Harry Potter and Hermione Granger—she took an exaggerated amount of enjoyment out of taunting her brother Ronald with embarrassing bits and close calls of their Christmas vacation. Most of them were of a rather non innocent nature, and Ginny kept repeating that the only reason for why he, along with his girlfriend Krista had not been caught had been simply because she liked Krista and had gone out of her way to keep her out of trouble. As for her brother, she had enough material to threaten him into exile for embarrassment or shame if she so wished to.

Since it seemed that neither Harry nor Hermione were anywhere in sight, though, even the ‘Make Fun of Ron Till He Passes Out from too Much Blood to the Head’ was getting tiresome. They had already checked everywhere. Now the only two places missing were the Head Girl’s room and the Quidditch Pitch. They had absolutely no intention of going anywhere near the latter! That infestation was too sick and scary even for Harry to go near to. The former, however, seemed out of the question as well, considering that both of the missing parties were the worst early birds in Gryffindor, and the sun was far too high in the sky for either of them to still be occupying a room with a bed. And neither was forthcoming enough to use said bed for other activities so early in the day, quite yet.

Still, that was just about their only option, so they headed there anyway.

They arrived quickly, and Ron spoke the password ("Hogwarts: A History") to which Ginny snickered. They weren’t expecting to find anything, so they were in for quite a shock when they saw, not only Hermione, quietly sleeping on her bed with Lily’s diary clutched to her heart, but Harry, sprawled next to her with an arm over her waist.

"Don’t they make a lovely picture," Ginny pointed out to her brother. As a matter of fact, not only were they both rather attractive people, but they seemed to be made to look good together, and, even from the outside, they radiated an aura of complete love for each other (she’d been filled in by Ron and Krista over holiday).

"They'd make a better one if they were naked," he replied sourly. His sister gasped, he simply shrugged it off. Looking at them, he knew that they had stepped no further into each other's arms than they would off a cliff. At least they could have taken off their cloaks! But no, there was absolutely no real physical evidence of romance between the two, they might as well have been brother and sister. "Come on, let's wake them up," he instructed, and, soon enough the sleeping couple was fully awake and rather embarrassed at having been found in such a compromising situation—from their point of view.

After discussing vacations for a short while Ron spoke up at the mention of Dumbledore's name in an attempt to make the exchange of information casual—and failing rather miserably. "Oh, speaking of Dumbledore," he began, his voice rather squeaky and too high pitched, "I ran into him while I was looking for you," his breath seemed to be coming out a bit short. He was definitely one to count on for subtle hints.

"Oh, you did?" Harry asked, prompting him to continue as nonchalantly as he could.

"Yeah, he said he wants both of you in his office tonight, after dinner," Ron squeaked and heaved a sigh of relief. He didn't want his sister to know that the three of them were Shadow Members of the Order.

"What about you?" Hermione asked with raised eyebrows.

"Oh, he already told me what he had to," he replied quickly, "and he said there was something personal, too," at first Ron had been offended by this, but he couldn't go against Dumbledore's wishes, even if it meant being left out. Besides, Harry and Hermione would tell him what he'd say anyway. At least he hoped.

The two just nodded in acceptance and quiet fell over the room as Ginny watched the Trio as though they'd all gone mad. What were they talking about? Ron was sure acting weird.

It had become so quiet as they all sat there absorbed in their own thoughts, that when a light tapping came from outside the window they all nearly jumped out of their skin.

There, in the deadly sting of winter's biting wind storms was an eagle carrying a letter, and trying desperately to get their attention so that they would pull him out of the frozen hell through which he was attempting to keep flight. Ginny went over and opened the window, allowing the beautiful dark predator inside. She took the letter from its mouth, and wondered out loud why anyone would send her an owl (eagle?) there when she noticed that it was addressed to her.

"Maybe someone saw you coming up here," Hermione supplied tartly.

Opening the letter she found out that it had been Draco Malfoy who'd written her (he must have heard her destination when she'd passed the Slytherin dungeons) and he'd bid her to meet him in the library after the evening meal.

"Hermione, do you mind if I borrow a quill quickly?" She asked her friend. The Head Girl nodded, and, taking a quill off her desk and dipping it in ink, she quickly scribbled on the back of the parchment that she would be there, placed the letter back in the envelope, and gave it back to the eagle, who took it. When she'd told him to take that back to his master he looked outside the window with reluctance, but went out anyway to complete his job.

What would Draco Malfoy wish to speak to her about?

o*o

At dinner Ginny nearly jumped out of her skin when she saw Malfoy get up from his seat and head for the doors while looking nonchalantly over at the Gryffindor table. Their eyes locked for a brief second before he turned to corner, and then, he was out of her line of sight.

Oh, Merlin, what do I do? Do I go now, or wait a little so nobody gets suspicious? I don't know. She ranted off in her head, completely forgetting that she had already had a couple of rendezvous in her life and that this wasn't unknown territory to her. Well, actually, anything that was Draco Malfoy was unknown territory to her.

As she was lost in her thoughts Kevin Creevy placed a rough hand on her shoulder a little too heavily, causing her to fall from her seat. "You 'kay?" He asked her, kneeling down in an attempt to help her, but only managing to get the metal spikes covering the knee of his pants a little too close to Ginny's eyes for comfort.

"Ack!" She screamed, noticing the sharp metal points aiming at her eyeballs.

Kevin didn't seem to notice, and only brought his knee closer trying to inspect Ginny's face better. "You 'kay?" He repeated. "You dun look too good," he said trying to be sympathetic.

Maybe it was the spiky hair, or the gothic necklaces, or the black eyeliner, or possibly the metal spikes, but, in any case, Ginny didn't feel much sympathy coming from him. Backing up as much as she could away from his knee, she stood up, slightly sweaty and a complete mess from her fall. "No, actually, I don't feel too well," she informed him, "I think I'll go now," and with that she practically flew out of the Great Hall doors.

Once she reached the hallway, she slowed to a quick marching step as she made her way to the library chanting under her breath. "Not that scary, we were not that scary, we were so not that scary," she hadn't even noticed that she entered the library. There wasn't anybody there yet. Maybe it had been a hoax. Walking over to a window, the image of Kevin's knee spikes kept on showing in her mind. "No, we were definitely not that scary at their age," she finalised out loud.

"Not as scary as who?" A cold chuckling voice called from behind her, his breath brushing her ear, making her jump a two clear feet in the air with a small screech. Thankfully, Madame Pince seemed to be elsewhere at the moment (so she did leave the library sometime!). Whipping around quickly she realised that: no, it hadn't been her imagination, and; yes, that had been Malfoy's breath she felt at her ear. He was standing a little too close for her comfort. Not that she minded, but the ease with which he invaded her private space was a bit unsettling.

"Uh...nothing!" She answered quickly, pressing her back against the window she'd been facing. Regaining her composure she asked, "What was it that you wanted to speak to me about?" This seemed to make him uncomfortable, as she noticed his superior smirk dim quite a bit. She raised her eyebrows. "Well?" She encouraged him. He still didn't say anything. "What is it, Malfoy?" Her tone was starting to become concerned.

"Well, I..." he began, and then drifted off, trying to find the best way to put this. He cleared his throat. "I noticed that your family owls don't seem very reliable," he began. She snorted. Well, that was an understatement. Errol was holding himself up only thanks to Spellotape, and Pig was too busy trying to keep his balance to remember actually delivering his errand.

"And..." she encouraged, trying to get him to finish.

"And I figured I should give you this, since it was Christmas and all..." he told her. She raised her eyebrows. Give her what? She didn't see anything. And then he whistled and a large, regal, tawny owl swooped down from one of the bookshelves and landed on Draco's outstretched arm (which was equipped to hold him, she noticed sharply). Her eyebrows shot up at this, and he felt the need to explain. "He used to be mine, but I can't take care of him now that I've got Ator, my eagle," he told her. "His a good owl, but he wants too much attention, and I don't have enough to around," he finished.

She found her hand reach for the owl's feathers of it's own volition. "He's beautiful," she heard herself say. "What's his name?" She asked.

"Sir."

She grinned. "How appropriate," she mumbled, stroking the feathers gently. Sir nipped at her fingers affectionately. "I think he likes me," she smiled up at the blond.

He blushed. "He warms easily to girls," he informed her.

"Thank you," she didn't know what else to say. "I wasn't expecting this," she confessed. He shrugged. "I have something for you, too," she told him. His head snapped to look at her. She found herself flushing as red as her hair. "Well, it's not as grand as Sir, here," she began, "but it might come in handy," she offered, pulling a rolled up piece of parchment from her robes and handing it to him. He took it and unrolled it. It was blank. He seemed offended. "Don't think bad!" She yelled. "I put a lot of work into charming that, you know?" One of his eyebrows raised in question. "For one thing," she started, "it can only be read by the person you wish it to. If anybody else reads it, it's just a bunch of doodles," he seemed impressed. "Also, once it's been read, the ink will be absorbed by the parchment, but if you wish to read a particular message again, you just have to think of it, and the words will be drawn back out," he was definitely impressed now. "And it's charmed so that either you or I could use it," Merlin, was she embarrassed at having to say that! "But if you want someone else to use it, just tell me, and I'll change the charm," she added hastily in conclusion.

He rolled the parchment back up, and bonked her lightly in the head with it before placing it in his robes. "Thanks," he mumbled and she found herself blushing again. "Come on," he exclaimed suddenly, breaking the silence, "I'll show you where he's kept in the owlery," he said, raising the arm that was carrying Sir and heading for the tower where the messengers were kept.

o*o

Harry and Hermione, meanwhile hadn't left her bedroom since they'd come back from training that afternoon, and had been so engrossed in reading Lily's diary that they hadn't noticed they'd skipped dinner.

They were now reading about the Solar Crowning Ball when they came to a point of interest.

The dance was wonderful, I don't think I've ever enjoyed myself quite as much at a social gathering, but that could just be because I'd attended the dance with James, and that, itself, made it special. So often I hear of girls dreaming up the perfect date before actually going

to one, yet, once it's over and done with, have nothing but complaints because it didn't live up to their expectations.

Honestly, I didn't have any particular hopes for the night but to be able to snake a couple of dances from James and have a few laughs with my friends, but I got so much more out of it, and James, even though he's only had one day to get ready for it, has gone so much out of his way to make me happy, that each time I looked at him I either felt like smiling like a bloke or start crying. Usually it was one of the two anyhow.

As for Snape, well, he managed to find a date on time (he is a Prefect, after all), but I found that most of the night he spent glaring at James. That of course, was of no use to him, since Sirius had already received the spill from James and had ordered Cicciobello to keep an eye on the Slytherin the whole night. Each time Severus got too close to either of us, Cicciobello would attack, and I must say, he was loving each second of it. I think Jenna fused her photomaker with all the embarrassing moving pictures she was taking of him.

I think they'll all make Gryffindor history.

There was, however, a very low note of the night, and it has to do with the very same Severus. While I was dancing with James, I just happened to look in his direction, and I was hit full on by a vision. I'm glad James was holding me so close, or I would have fallen to my knees.

It was a rather brutal vision. It showed Voldemort (it couldn't have been anyone else even though I only saw the back of his robes and his hand) chanting a spell and pressing his wand onto Severus' arm. Quickly, like ink spilling out of a bottle, Severus' arm was covered in a permanent image of the Dark Mark.

The vision was strong and clear, meaning it was either close to its realization, or past it.

Then it changed, and it showed me Voldemort falling at the end of a baby that in the process was marked with a Lightning shaped scar on his forehead, the same from my previous visions. It's the first time I

see how he will actually receive it. After the fall of the Dark Lord, Severus will be forced to make a choice.

I hope the Boy of Lightning will help him onto the right path.

After that, James was at my side the whole night, making sure I was ok, and his care made me forget those visions, but this morning they came back, and I went to see Dumbledore about them. I hadn't spoken to him of my visions since my fifth year, when I realised that the visions about the Marauders should have been kept to myself.

I told him everything from what I saw of Severus, to the boy with the scar.

He was calm however, and told me that he has complete trust in Snape.

I know Severus isn't evil, even though he's not quite charming or great company, but I don't think that we should simply step aside and let him choose the wrong path. However, I realise the Headmaster's right. He's already chosen his path for now, and we won't be able to change it at least for a long while.

We can only watch and pray, just like Dumbledore told me.

Suddenly Hermione cried out, throwing her hands over her mouth, her eyes wide in realization.

"What? What's wrong?" Harry jumped in surprise, looking around to see if there was anything out of place that might set her off so.

"DUMBLEDORE!" She cried out, her eyes telling Harry that he should know what she was talking about. He didn't. "We were supposed to go see him tonight!" Realisation dawned on him, and, as though thinking the same thing, they both bolted out of the dormitories and out of Gryffindor tower. They couldn't run because there would be Prefects about, but they did walk rather quickly.

One they reached the statue they both yelled the password at once, "Sugar Quills!", and made their way up the stairs as though they had

dementors at their heels. They stopped in front of Fawkes red faced and out of breath. Behind his desk, the mad Headmaster did seem rather amused. Behind him were Professor McGonagall, who didn't look quite as stern as usual, and a big, black dog. Snuffles!

Just as they thought that he was no longer Snuffles, but a rather healthy looking Sirius Black. He seemed as though he'd been hanging around the house elves for a couple of days.

"Glad to see you two could make it," he mumbled, a jovial grin spreading on his face at the sight of the two that he'd come to think of as his children. Harry and Hermione welcomed him with matching warm grins.

"Very well," Dumbledore began, "as shadow members of the Order of the Phoenix," Fawkes gave a cry at this, "we have decided that for your own protection it would be best that you start a particular kind of training, for you are both students with a high profile," that must have been the reason why Ron wasn't there. He would hate to do anything because someone felt he needed to be protected.

Harry and Hermione nodded in agreement, not bothering to ask which kind of training they would undertake, though Hermione did have a guess. After all, there was only one thing that she could think of that Sirius and McGonagall had in common and they could teach together.

"It had been decided that you will start animagus training," Dumbledore confirmed Hermione's suspicions, "and they shall be your tutors," she'd been expecting that as well.

"We deem it much safer for you, if you were ever to be associated with us, if you were able to leave a situation unnoticed, or, at least, in different forms," the both nodded in agreement. "It could also be helpful in case we need someone to scout for us," that actually made a lot of sense. "Any questions?"

Hermione spoke, "When will we start?"

Dumbledore's eyes twinkled as he saw past her cool behaviour, and into the excited child that could never learn enough or too soon. "Your training will start tomorrow with Mr. Weasley as your only other companion."

Again they nodded. "Yes, sir."

Then, he leaned forward and indicated them to do the same. "This shall be kept secret," he stated quietly behind his half moon spectacles, "for your own sake."

Then they were dismissed with a smile, "Go to the kitchens and have something to eat," it was just like Dumbledore to notice that they'd been absent at dinner.

It was useless to say, the prospect excited them both, so excited, as a matter of fact, that, once they'd reached the kitchen and had their fills, they, somehow, ended up having a food fight with the entire house elf population. Ah, they had no idea how the whole fight had started, they were both too giddy at the moment to try and remember, but they were quite enjoying it. Even the house elves, that thrived on work, were having a blast because it meant more work later.

At a certain point, Hermione slipped on some creme caramel that had splotted onto the floor, and fell backwards, grabbing hold of Harry's robes in an attempt to keep herself up, yet only managing to bring him down on top of her in a fit of giggles from the both of them.

The house elves, seeing that the fight was over (after all the instigators had disappeared...under the table), stopped playing around and went to enjoy themselves in their job, completely oblivious to the tense atmosphere at their feet (or maybe under the table it was just too dark for them to see). Within minutes, they had finished, and left to work somewhere else.

All Harry and Hermione knew was that they were now alone, their bodies pressed together so wonderfully that it made them dizzy, still giddy from the food fight, and desperately in need for a kiss, to which, almost instantly the both gave in.

At first it was tentative, with the lingering taste of sweets and pumpkin juice, but soon, they were entwined so desperately that the need for each other was practically palpable. They clung to each other like a drug addict to the first fix after a withdrawal. They'd needed to kiss each other, feel each other physically as they'd wanted to do for far too long, know that there was the possibility of something more than the shadow of friendship that would dissolve if it didn't turn into something more soon.

Their lips met, danced, caressed each other, then parted slightly to accommodate the other's better, and went back to their job of sweetly torturing the other. If Dobby hadn't come looking for them to say good night...well, they didn't know what could have happened, or how the other would have felt once it might have been over.

Slowly and reluctantly they pulled away from each other, pulled themselves out from under the table, and, after saying good night to Dobby, left the kitchens and headed for Gryffindors tower in the most unnerving and uncomfortable silence they'd known in their long years of friendship, both wondering what the other thought of what had just transpired between them.

Finally, Hermione felt the need to speak.

"Harry," she began, and saw him jump out of his skin at the sound of her voice interrupting his thoughts. She cleared her throat. "Harry, listen," she began, but he interrupted her.

"No, it's ok," he reassured her.

"What?" She snapped surprised. Huh? What? What's ok?

"I understand," he stated with a shrug, not once turning to look at her.

"Huh?" She mumbled intelligently. Ok, she was supposed to be the most clever witch in Hogwarts, but she was having a mighty difficult time deciphering Harry's out-of-the-blue sentences.

"I know you didn't mean to kiss me," he told her, finally looking into her eyes, his own dark, hard, and unreadable. "Ever," he added quietly.

"What?" She asked surprised. "Harry," his name came out as a whisper as her mind fumbled for the words that would convince him otherwise.

"No, Hermione, don't worry," he ordered her, making her look at him with her eyebrows furrowed. "I don't want this to ruin us just because we got carried away by the atmosphere," he told quietly.

Now her look was dubious. "What are you saying?"

He raked a hand through his ever messy hair, making it even more disarrayed. "We should just forget about this," he told her, the words sounding more like a sigh that needed to be forced out rather than like a conviction.

"Forget about it?" She asked numbly.

"Yes," he told her. "Starting from now," he specified.

"So," Hermione began, taking a step closer to him, "as of now we're just going to act like nothing was?" She asked, trying to see if she'd got him straight.

"Yes," he assured her with an emphasised nod of the head.

She looked as though she was pondering the situation, then, she looked up at him. "In that case," she started and stepped up to him, putting her hands around his neck and choosing to act rather than finish the sentence with words. She kissed him so passionately that the world began to spin far too quickly for the both of them.

When the two thought they would pass out either from lack of air to the brain, or from sheer need of each other, Hermione pulled away, and a dazed Harry looked at her with glazed eyes and mumbled a strangled, "What--?"

She smiled sadly at him. "Just wanted to have one that I could remember," she told him quietly, and turned to walk up to the Gryffindor tower, Harry staying behind, trying to decipher what she'd said.

In her room, Hermione laid in bed awake at night, thoughts of Harry running through her mind. She remembered Christmas morning, and the look on Harry's face when she'd given him her present. It wasn't much, and she'd enjoyed doing it for him, but the look of sheer joy that he gave her when he began to flip through the pages of his photo album, then one he'd had since first, and that she'd filled with thousands of recent pictures of everyone that he'd loved in the years she'd known him...well, it was a feeling that she wished she could give him every holiday season. And when he'd pulled out the present for her...she looked at the necklace that sat on her night dresser. During the day she never took it off. It was a simple golden chain, with a small sapphire onto it with beautiful celtic carvings. He'd told her that it was made for research. Whenever she was on the right track while searching for something, the carvings would glow white.

And then her thoughts drifted back to the two kisses they'd shared that night, and the ones that had anticipated them. His words echoed in her mind. We should just forget about them. They'd stung, just like the tears threatening to spill over her eyes, but she knew that, at least for the time being, it was the only thing to do. But there were two things that she was certain of. For one, she would never be able to forget those kisses, as he'd asked her to. And two, those kisses would haunt her until she couldn't have another.

In his room, Harry thought the same thing.

To be continued

Author's ramblings: I guess I forgot to tell you that I wrote this in a real hurry (but maybe I didn't need to considering I updated too days after I put out Ch. 7), but I did, and so I'm afraid this lacked a lot of the descriptive flourishes I always try to exaggerate with, so I apologise. And, whoo, two kisses between H/Hr! Too bad they weren't very descriptive, sorry.

Anyhow, if you have any comments, constructive critique, flames, anything, please let me know at , or simply leave a review.

Thank you,

Pearl

Every parent leaves something behind for their children to remember them by. Lily Evans didn't know, when she left her diary behind, that it would help her son into knowing her and himself...or did she?

Disclaimer: I own nothing but Cicciobello, Kevin Creevy, the Stalker Mob, Lily's diary, Krista, and the plot. Oh, yeah, and the Diggorinta too! You know it, I know it, so let's move on.

Whoo! This took me a pretty long while to get out, almost a whole week! Sorry for the wait! Anyway, I won't bother you with my usual banter today...oh, wait! In this chapter there's a scene in which there talk about sex, but nothing explicit, so it should still fit safely into the PG-13 rating, but if you think I should bring it up to R just tell me, and I'll make do.

And now: on with the fic

Harry Potter and the Knowledge of a Mother

Chapter 9: Training and detention

Sitting in the nearly empty Transfiguration classroom—sealed with a locking spell to keep Sirius's presence hidden from the rest of the students—three seventh years listened with varying degree of attention as Professor Minerva McGonagall droned on the explanation of the inner workings of tranfiguring into Animagi.

Sirius sat snoring at her desk.

Harry and Hermione sat taking notes, both rather interested in anything that had to do with transforming themselves in animals, while Ron fumed and glared at the teacher's back each time she turned. Why did they have to do these special lessons on Hogsmeade weekends? Of course, Krista was understanding, she knew that, being close friends with the two next to him, came some responsibility. She was even nice enough not to ask what it was, but that didn't mean that he had to be as understanding as she.

Nope, he was rather mad. Sure, he'd been exited that he would learn to become an Animagus, but he did NOT wish to learn to do so on his

personal time! They should have thought to do it after classes, in the tutoring hours, or something like that. Besides, they had the N.E.W.T.s that year (for which he still hadn't started studying), and with that on top of it, they had better give them all extra credit!

Finally, when he thought he might self combust from all the fire glares he was giving McGonagall, said teacher turned from the board announcing that they would start small practices in the next lesson, and that, for the moment they were dismissed. Ron practically jumped from his seat, McGonagall gave him one of her stern looks, and then she went working on waking up Sirius, who was very much sleeping like a log.

Once he'd woken, and transformed into 'Snuffles', they removed the locking charm and left the classroom. Ron noticed, however, that nobody had yet returned from Hogsmeade, including Krista, and there was still a long time to come before it became dinner time. "Alright, let's go read the diary," he mumbled, stretching his arms over his head and netting his fingers at his nape.

"Isn't it nice how he comes to us only when he knows Krista's not around?" Hermione mumbled, rolling her eyes and giving Harry a pregnant look, he laughed at her, giving her an affectionate pat on the shoulder.

"Hey, I resent that," Ron yelled back, sending the two into more giggles, and eventually ending up laughing himself. Well, he had to admit, he hadn't been very close to the two of them, especially now that they seemed to need him the most. There was a void growing between the two, and he wasn't doing a thing to stop it. Even Krista was admonishing him because of it. Well, he'd try to work on it now.

Since the common room was full of the younger students that weren't allowed to go to Hogsmeade yet, including the Stalker Mob, Kevin Creevy, and Cicciobello who was terrorising the lot of them, they made a mad dash for the dormitories, and managed to reach Hermione's room before anyone took notice of them. Because of the Stalkers, Madam Malkins had been forced to always keep Harry's measurements nearby in case that he might need an emergency set of robes.

In all honesty, Harry, though he'd been attentive to the lesson at first glance, was lost in his own self pitying thoughts. Hermione must have thought him a thick-skulled retard when he'd told her to forget the more than memorable kisses they'd shared. He really hadn't had a choice, though.

If she'd known what was going on she would have put a stop to it herself. Maybe that was the reason for why he still hadn't told her, or even Ron. Ron would be worried for about three minutes, and then it would get pushed to the back of his mind because of more impending things in his life, such as Krista.

Hermione would go ballistic. She'd start naming any faculty member from Dumbledore, who was the only one to know besides Harry himself, Madame Pomfrey, all the way to Madame Pince, the librarian. What was the point of consulting the librarian, he had no idea, but Hermione seemed to have her and the library as her constant last resort.

No, he couldn't tell them that his scar had started to bother him again, in ever increasing amounts as well. Every day, the itch would grow just slightly until it became a constant crawl under his skin, and then a throb. Trouble was not too far behind them, but he'd decided—with Dumbledore's advice—to not mention anything until they would complete their Animagus training. That way, they would have at least that one more weapon against them.

Harry shook himself of the thoughts. They weren't the right things to think about while the two people he wished to protect were right there to notice his dark composure. Turning to Hermione he gave her all his attention as she began to read Lily's diary.

Lily had started her seventh year at Hogwarts as Head Girl, a very surprised Head Girl, since, for some unfathomable reason, James had been made Head Boy. Every one had been a little put off by the fact that a well known prankster, the Prefects' nightmare, and not even one himself, had made the position of Head Boy. Still, soon everyone realised that Dumbledore probably couldn't have made a

better choice because James took the job seriously right away, and did it exceptionally well.

The only one who didn't seem too happy about the whole prospect had been Severus Snape.

But that was of secondary importance to Lily. In those days, she hardly wrote of anything or anyone but James. Since the two were sharing their own common room it was inevitable that they'd spend a considerable amount of extra time together, despite both of their responsibilities, and, just as inevitably, they'd ended up getting closer and closer still, until, rather early in their year, Harry and Ron found themselves listening to Hermione's voice reading the description that Lily had penned of her first lovemaking experience with James.

If anyone asked me for details, or how it started, or what was actually going on, I wouldn't be able to tell them. When I was in his arms, I was nothing but a creature of feeling, drinking in everything that was James. All I could see was his face, hovering over mine, looking like the pleasure he was feeling was almost torture to him. He refused to take off his glasses. He said he wanted to see me and see me well, and, as far as I remember, he never took his eyes off mine, and I love him for that, because, looking at him I found myself completely ignorant of everything that was going on around me. It gave me an anchor.

Besides that, all I really remember was that it was slow, loving but passionate, that he handled me with the greatest care, and that it was the most magical thing that I ever experienced in my life. I felt complete and whole because the missing part of me had finally joined the rest. Everything he did, was for me, and me alone.

I don't think I could ever feel as loved.

But the most beautiful thing, the most beautiful of all...well, that was this morning, when I woke up and found him fast asleep, clutching me as though I was an anchor, his glasses askew on his face because he hadn't taken them off, our bodies entwined, both safely nestled in my bed.

It felt like coming home. Like I had finally found my home.

Whenever I'm with him, I feel like my existence has a meaning.

And what we did last night proved it, because it was the most meaningful thing that I could ever experience. I spent most of the morning watching him sleep, and when he woke, we spent the rest of the day together, kissing, talking, and making sweet love.

There was a pause, and then Ron spoke a little too loud, a little too suddenly. "I didn't feel like that the first time I did it," he told them openly.

Hermione's head shot up, red faced and upset because he'd ruined the perfect atmosphere that had created itself at Lily's description. In her opinion, it was perfect, it wasn't vulgar, and it was pure emotion. Ron had just crushed all that. "WHAT?!" She screeched at him in challenge.

"Well, see, when we first did it, we completely lost control, we were like two animals. Like we didn't get to eat for weeks and we were each other's food," he explained, and didn't bother to stop there. His description went on, in full detail, and Hermione found herself listening, her mind boggled, as one of her best friends described sexual acts from a male point of view that she had never dreamed—or wanted—to hear. Especially from Ron's vulgar mouth.

"Okay," she interrupted him, her voice squeaky in disbelieving, embarrassed anger, "go away," she ordered. "Now."

Ron swallowed, suddenly afraid that she might let her anger loose, and made himself small on the bed. "Let's get back to reading," he mumbled quietly. Hermione glared at him, but turned back to the diary anyhow and began to read again.

My visions of Lightning Bolt keep getting clearer and clearer. I don't think it's safe for me anymore to write them in this diary, and I don't wish to put too many charms on it, or it might confuse it's powers, so I decided that I'm going to record them in a journal.

Eventually, when I think my visions are clear, and I've figured out their meanings, I'll give the journal in custody to someone I trust, and hope that, whoever I choose to give it to, will know what to do with it when the time comes.

"Who could she have given it to?" Ron asked out loud. "Do you think she even finished it?"

Hermione shrugged. "I'm sure she finished it, because she was already getting to something at this point, but I'm not sure who she would have given it to," she told him. "Definitely none of the Marauders, though," she finished with certainty.

Harry agreed with her. "Maybe it was Jenna," he supplied helpfully.

"Yeah, you're probably right," she told him. "Should we go talk to Dumbledore?" She inquired. Maybe the ancient mad wizard would know if she had it, and where she was now.

"Maybe it's best," Harry replied, and, without another word, headed for the door, followed by Harry and Hermione. He had no idea how they all three managed to escape the insane stalkers, or Kevin's insane attempts at being a bodyguard, but, sooner than they expected, they found themselves in Dumbledore's office, asking him if he knew anything at all about a journal that Lily wrote.

"Yes," he answered. "I believe she finished it right before graduation. She offered to give it to me, but I refused," he told them, and in explanation added, "a Seer should never know what another Seer sees."

"So who has it?" Harry asked. Somehow, he was certain that he would know.

"The only person who knew everything about her visions," he replied truthfully. All three knew who he was talking about, but only Hermione dared speak the name.

"Jenna."

"Yes," Dumbledore confirmed.

"Where is she?" Harry inquired again, certain once more that the headmaster had the answer to that to.

"In Hogsmeade," he told them simply. "She works in the small library off the main road, I believe Miss Granger is familiar with it," he said, his eyes twinkling at Hermione.

She nodded, and, a short time later, they exited the office, and stopped in front of the statue of the Griffin.

"This is strange," Hermione pointed out loud, "I know everybody in that library," neither of the boys doubted that, "but I've never spoken to anyone called Jenna," she told them. "She must have changed her name."

Harry placed a comforting hand on her shoulder. "Don't worry about it, next week we'll go check it out," he told her quietly, when they noticed that several of the students out in Hogsmeade were now coming back.

They didn't know what divinity was against them, but when they saw Ginny walking and talking civilly with Draco Malfoy, they had to petrify Ron to keep him from slaughtering the blond.

They spoke shortly, and, right before Malfoy turned around to go to the Slytherin dungeons, they saw him pull out a rolled parchment from his robes and hand it to Ginny. Hermione recognised that parchment immediately. Levitating Ron so that they could get him easily back to the Common Room, Hermione went to Ginny.

"Is it working?" She asked in way of greeting. Ginny looked back at her, clutching the parchment between her hands as tightly as she dared, while being careful of not ruining it.

She gave Hermione a nervous smile and looked down at the paper in her hands. "I don't know," she answered truthfully, "but I'll find out when I've read," she finished with a wide grin.

Hermione smiled at her, and placed a hand on her shoulder, "Let me know," she said simply as they quietly headed back to the Gryffindor tower. Once there, Ginny dashed up the stairs for the sixth year girl's dormitory with only a passing word of salutation to her friends, and, once there, threw herself on her bed, still clutching the paper as though it were her anchor to life.

Carefully, she unrolled the parchment, and quickly read the short missive. Jumping out of bed she ran to her desk and squiggled her reply as quickly as she could, and dashed right back out of her dorm room, making a wild run for the lake.

Malfoy was there waiting for her, as he'd said in his brief letter. The note, though at first glance, to anyone might have seemed like an unimportant question, she knew very well that it wasn't. He'd asked her if she thought that the family that he'd come from, its name, and its power, would haunt him forever. She handed the letter over with a simple, "Here."

Now, as she watched him unroll the parchment right there before her eyes, she had a strange feeling of déjà-vu when her heart began to thump so loudly in its cage she thought he could hear it. It was just like when she'd given him her letter on the Hogwarts Express, when she thought he wouldn't take it, yet in the end he did. Now her heart was doing the same mad tu-thumping it did back that day.

She watched speechless as he read the single sentence that replied his inquisition. Maybe it had been stupid of her to answer so simply, it might have seemed as though she thought his question might have been stupid to begin with. And maybe she shouldn't have rushed out the way she did, but let him think that she'd given this question a lot of thought, but instead she'd done everything by impulse, and now, she couldn't help but regret it.

He kept on staring at the paper as though trying to memorise the simple seven words. He read them over and over again. Only if you let them haunt you. That had been her reply. To her, everything was a question of will. Nothing would ever be able to bother her, if she didn't let it, but...could he be the same?

Wordlessly, he began to head back to the castle.

Oh, no, he's leaving, I made him mad! Come on, Ginny! Stop him! Say something! Anything! But all she managed to get out was a desperate cry of "Malfoy!"

He stopped in his track turning halfway so that she could see his profile. "The name's Draco," he corrected her, and continued on his way.

Ginny watched him go, an inevitable happy grin beginning to spread on her face. Maybe letting her instincts drive her hadn't been such a bad idea after all.

o*o

Harry and Hermione worked amongst themselves in their Potions assignment inside Snape's classroom, since Ron had taken station next to Malfoy as to be able to threaten him away from his sister. His best friends kept sending him imploring glances, asking him to forget about it and leave the Slytherin alone, but, as always, Ron was a thick pig headed prat.

In any case, they both found it a lot easier to work without the redheaded third of their group, as there was a lot less goofing off. They were actually the first ones to finish the assignment, and had done it all perfectly. However, Snape being Snape, he couldn't accept this from Harry.

"You shall serve detention with me today, Potter, for making your partner do everything in your place," he commended haughtily.

"You can't do that," Harry hissed back, saying that he'd done just as much as Hermione.

"That's right, sir, Harry and I worked on this in equal parts," Hermione put in trying to sound objective, and not like she was trying to protect her friend.

"If you wish to cover for him, Miss Granger, you may serve detention with him as well," he answered sharply, letting her, and everyone else, know that she really didn't have a choice in the matter.

Just that moment Dumbledore made his presence known by clearing his throat. The Potions teacher seemed startled and put off by this, instantly taking a defensive stance. "May I speak with you for a moment, Severus?" He asked quietly, and Snape followed him wordlessly into his own office. He sat in his own desk, which should have made him feel superior, but it did not. Even though Dumbledore was taking up the seat that was usually filled by troublesome students that Snape liked to eat for breakfast, he felt at a definite disadvantage.

"I'm very disappointed with you, Severus," Dumbledore began. That already didn't sound good. "What you just did to Mr. Potter and Miss Granger was very wrong, and a very definite abuse of power on your part," he expressed quietly.

Snape being Snape, he kept a cool head. "I don't see why, Albus," he started, condescendingly. "Potter can't boil water, much less obtain a perfect potion like what he had before him. I think it was rather obvious that Granger did all the work there," he finished in a monotone.

"Do you have proof?" The older man asked simply, and Snape stayed quiet. Dumbledore only looked at him, his eyes dim, missing their usual twinkle. Finally, he stood to leave, and Snape followed suit. "Watch yourself, Severus," he warned as he reached for the doorknob. "Abusing your powers will take you to very dark paths."

And with that he left, leaving Snape to stare at the spot he'd occupied seconds earlier.

o*o

That evening, in detention, Snape had given Harry and Hermione separate potions to brew, placed them at opposite sides of the classroom, and watched both with a critical eye as to make sure that they wouldn't communicate with the other. They didn't. And both

potions were brewed well. Hermione's was perfect, as always, but, this time, Harry's went quite close.

Having finished their assignment, and still at opposite ends of the classroom, both Gryffindors watched the head of Slytherin house, waiting for him to dismiss them. Stepping in the middle of an aisle between them he gestured with his hands for them to leave, wordlessly. Just as wordlessly they gathered their things and moved toward each other. As Hermione was about to pass by him, she bumped shoulders with Snape, and dropped her books in surprise.

Oh, no! She still had Lily's diary with her! Dropping down to the floor to pick her things up like a criminal who spilled the loot on the street during an escape she gave Snape every indication for him to butt in.

"Show your books, Miss Granger," he ordered simply. She turned to look at Harry, who seemed just as horrified as she was, but handed all her books to him anyway. She hoped against hope that he'd get bored of all her tomes before reaching the diary. Unfortunately, he didn't, and actually went straight for it. Opening to the first page, they found that he'd been trying to hold back the surprise at reading the name written on it. He then went to the page that Hermione had marked. He read the date out loud, and, out loud as well, he actually began to read the entry.

"Voldemort's attacks are getting worse. Several Muggleborns were attacked all over the world, and he's getting more followers. Again, my worries lie with Severus," he paused at this, interrupting his flat monotone, maybe trying to get over the shock that she'd written of him. "At lunch, when I looked over at the Slytherin section I had another one of my visions. It was of the recent past, and so strong that I nearly passed out because of it. James looked like he was about to go ballistic with worry for me. I think he's still afraid that my visions would hurt me somehow," Snape went on. Lily had visions? He'd heard the Marauders say something of the sort, but he'd never believed any of their crap.

"What I saw was horrible, and even worse was the knowledge that Severus had put himself through it just a short time prior. I saw him, kneeling before the Dark Lord, screaming in pain as Voldemort

placed his wand on his arm, and, with an incantation, made black, bloody ink ooze into his arm to form the Dark Mark. It was a horrible sight, and even worse was the fact that I could feel everything that he was feeling. The pain, the anguish, but most of all the jealousy and bitterness that pushed him to do it," he read. With a loud sudden snap, he closed the diary.

"How did you get this?" He asked bitterly. He was full of self righteous anger, for which he didn't have a motive or a right to, but he still felt it.

Harry was the one to answer. "It was in the time capsule that the Diggorinta pulled out in our Remember Garden."

"McGonagall said that Harry's the only one with the right to read it," Hermione added, hoping that it would probe the teacher into handing back the thick leather bound book.

"Then why was it in your hands?" He spat back sharply.

"Harry asked me to read it for him," she replied quickly. "A girl's words should be read by a girl's mouth."

"If you can be called a girl," he taunted.

Hermione just looked at him, not offended by his worthless insult. "I hope that woman's faith was well placed when she wrote those words," she told him quietly, her voice soft.

Snape's eyes widened at this. What else had Lily written of him? "What words?" He asked, maybe a little too quickly, a little too sharply.

Hermione was just as quick to answer. "The ones where she spoke her complete trust in you," she began. "That you would choose your sides with wisdom," she told him finally.

Snape didn't want to hear any of it anymore. He told them to leave with a single, grave, steel word. "Dismissed."

She wasn't intimidated in the least. "The diary, please," she held her hand out for him to place the tome in.

"Dismissed," he repeated, his tone as sharp as before, giving no indication of having the intention to return it.

"The diary," Hermione repeated, her voice rising slightly in anger. He threw it at her face, but she'd been expecting it, and blocked accordingly.

"Dismissed!" He shouted one last time, and, finally, without any need of further prodding, they walked silently out of the cold, empty classroom, leaving the man by himself, alone with thoughts of the past.

To be continued.

Author's ramblings: All in all, I'm not too happy about this chapter, but I'm not really disappointed either, it's one of those so and so chapters, if you will. Anyway, if you have any comments, constructive critique, flames, contact me at . Go ahead, I'll have a BBQ. Or you could just leave a review.

Oh, and I want to thank lev. (did I write it right?) for her wonderfully constructive reviews. Did my chapter really make you think? Wow, I'm flattered!

Thank you for reading

Pearl

Aka Roberta

Every parent leaves something behind for their children to remember them by. Lily Evans didn't know, when she left her diary behind that it would help her son into knowing her and himself...or did she?

Disclaimer: Ah, if you've read this far you should be aware of what's mine and what's not, so lets move on.

A couple of personal notes: Anime Ambreen and Poke' Manic: I think what you're asking is how do they find time to study with all the extra stuff I threw in the plot, right? Well, for one thing the Animagi training is only so often, like on weekends and days where their schedule isn't crazy, and they read the diary at night (somehow, I think that out of the three of them, Ron is the only one who'd be missing sleep). Sailor Sol: I don't agree. I think Dumbledore has given Snape all the little epithets that he needs, and now Severus is starting to cross a dangerous line, and needs to hear things straight to avoid doing so. Just my opinion, though. PinkPantherLady: I'd like to have the whole Harry and Hermione denial thing over with, too, but since that would get in the way of my plot, I won't be able to do that for a few more chapters, as you'll see at the end of this one. Sorry. I want to thank everyone for their wonderful and (sometimes) constructive reviews. I'm up to 123! Can you believe that? YAY!

Anyway, and now: on with the fic.

Harry Potter and the Knowledge of a Mother

Chapter 10: Jenna

Harry and Hermione were again sitting by themselves in the common room, enveloped by the quiet of the night as the rest of the house slept while they sat in front of that warm, magical, crackling fire. Hermione's voice wrapped around him like a warm blanket as she spoke his mother's words. Lily had been worried for the past several weeks. James, it seemed, had been taking far too much interest in the Death Eaters' movements, and, in particular, of the attacks against the muggle-born. She feared it might have meant that he had a thought in mind to stop them.

She didn't want to lose him.

That was why she went to him, one day, after overhearing a conversation between James and someone of their house that was closely connected to the Ministry of Magic where the two were exchanging information.

I couldn't keep quite anymore. He's been deliberately hiding this from me (probably because he knows I'd be against it), and I can't stand it anymore. I can't just stay back and watch as he gets himself neck deep into troubles that he shouldn't feel are his own. I know that he's doing this because of his family. Because Voldemort took them. I know he still feels all that hatred inside of him.

And I also know that, to some small extent, he's doing this because of me.

And I won't let him.

As soon as his "informant" walked off, I walked in, and we instantly fell into a fight. He accused me of eavesdropping. Well, what else was I supposed to do when he wasn't talking to me.

It was probably the longest fight we've had in a long time. Usually, we just bicker. This was all out shouting in the middle of the hall, two centimetres from each other's faces, accusing the other of keeping secrets.

That's when I blew. When he said I was keeping secrets. I practically spit in his face that he nearly knew my entire life from the day I was born till now, while he...well, he didn't even tell me about his parents ... "And now, you're trying to keep secrets from me! You think I can't see you sneaking around, getting your precious information on the Death Eaters, chasing your own grave, and for what?" I yelled at his face

He slammed his fists against the wall, that until then, I hadn't even noticed was behind my shoulder. He'd cornered me, or maybe I'd cornered myself. Either way, the yelling stopped then, and he just looked at me with the most loving, enraged, tempestuous expression he's ever worn in front of me.

We didn't speak for a long time. Then...

"I can't just watch while they kill Muggle-borns and worrying, thinking, and sometimes, knowing that you could be next."

How was I supposed to argue with that. Voldemort had taken everything away from him. Everything. All he had now was here in this school. The Marauders, his vital friends, and myself. We're all that he has left, and he wants to protect us.

He went on to tell me that there are other people, both within and outside of the school, that would give us support, that they might be able to prevent at least some of those deaths, but it was useless of him trying to convince me by that point. He'd already won me over.

I just wrapped my arms around him, and we drew comfort from each other, even if we both knew that it might eventually bring to our deaths.

After that they established a circle, formed of about twenty-five people between Hogwarts students and outsiders, which consisted mainly in searching for possible victims and warned them of the possible attack.

Still in the middle of reading an entry, they were scared out of their wits as the portrait hole swung open to let Ron—clad in the Invisibility Cloak, back from one of his frequent visits to the Astronomy Tower in the company of Krista Perril—who sauntered in with the biggest, goofiest grin of his life spreading from of his ears to the other. He looked disgustingly happy to both Harry and Hermione, who'd been envying him for his flourishing relationship with the Ravenclaw for quite a duration of time.

They didn't bother asking what made him so happy, they cared very little as a matter of fact, but he told them anyway. "She loves me," he exclaimed. "SHE LOVES ME!" He repeated, this time trying to wake up the whole house to let them know. However he quieted down almost instantly and immersed himself in a very fast and lengthy description of exactly what had happened to bring his spirits to such

high skies. Both of them ignored him, but let him finish just to humour him.

"Good for you, Ron," Hermione cut in before he could go into a second, more detailed retelling of the evening, rather annoyed at him, "now, listen to this," she told him, and dived into a much more interesting and entertaining description of what Lily had revealed.

"Wait," paused Ron after hearing the whole story. "That sounds sort of like the Order of the Phoenix," he pointed out. "Keep reading, we'll see if we can find out anything else," he indulged.

Indeed, reading on they did find some other rather shocking revelations. Two were the most amazing. One, Wormtail was actually the one that found out most of the information. He'd sneak in the Slytherin dungeons, hide in some convenient dark spot, and listen in on the conversation of some of the most influential pupils (which he knew were Death Eaters, or at least were close to some). The other, was that Dumbledore found them out almost instantly. All the students involved had been called into his office for a very confidential meeting.

They were all terrified that they might get expelled for what they were doing, but found instead, that the ancient Headmaster supported them, and was actually willing to lend a helping hand—or as many as he could find. He would support them in shadow and cover for them when the need came.

Another thing that made the Trio a bit sick was the fact that Dumbledore kept on telling both James and Lily to be careful of the ones around them. Lily feared what he said, because the visions she had of one close to them turning to the Dark Side kept haunting her, but James was confident that not one of the members of the circle—the only people he was closely contacting with on regular basis at the time—would ever betray him or his cause.

Oh, had he been wrong!

Harry was the one to speak, but he only voiced what the other two had already decided was necessary. "First chance tomorrow we'll go talk to Dumbledore."

o*o

The next day, after classes were over, the Trio found themselves sitting before the Headmaster, after having told him with awkward words what they'd found out, and were, presently, even more awkwardly waiting for him to say something.

He just stared at them. It was as though he was trying to read each one of them, to know what they all thought of what they found out, and what would come of it from each of them.

"Yes," he finally answered in his usual quiet manner, but they all noticed that the twinkle in his eyes was quite dimmed at the moment, though there nonetheless. "The members of that circle are now all part of the Order of the Phoenix," he explained simply, which didn't actually answer any of their questions, but was a start anyhow.

"Oh," Harry mumbled as he shifted uncomfortably in his seat.

Dumbledore looked at him long and hard before telling him, "They saved a lot of lives," it wasn't missed by any that he was referring to Lily and James.

"And lost their own," Harry replied, surprising calm and steady, though his lack of expression was almost eerie.

"Yes," Dumbledore confirmed.

"Yes," Harry echoed.

Swiftly, the old wizard changed subject. "Professor McGonagall tells me your Animagi training is going quite well," he voiced quietly.

"Yes," Harry mumbled, steady and quiet.

"Tomorrow you will try to morph," it wasn't a question.

"Yes," Harry answered anyway, just as expressionless as before

Get some rest in light of that," Dumbledore dismissed them.

Wordlessly the three left the office, and Ron and Hermione left Harry alone with his thoughts, knowing that talking to him before he figured any of it out would only make things worse.

Harry spent the remainder of the day trying to leave his thoughts behind as he attempted to outrun them on his trusty Firebolt, but they were too quick, even for him. They always caught up with him. He finally slumped in his bed with question about The Circle, his parents, and Severus Snape. His last thought before he lost consciousness was, "What if he became Death Eater just to oppose my father?"

o*o

"Very good," announced Professor Minerva McGonagall as she dismissed her three soon to be Animagi students. "We will try a full transfiguration next time," she announced proudly.

Well, none of them had managed to reach their full form, nor was anyone expecting them too, but the results were, in any case, very fruitful. Ron had whiskers, and Hermione had sprouted a beautifully unusual golden tail, which were gone at the moment. Harry had, at one moment, been covered head to toe in feathers, which had been rather a funny sight, and he still didn't understand how he managed it from the lack of sleep the previous night. He'd only managed to doze off somewhere near sunrise, and had to wake less than an hour later.

In any case, when Ron suggested they go read the diary again (since Krista was busy with her friend's for the evening) he didn't protest, and soon they were all sitting in the nearly empty common room.

They had reached a particularly interesting point of Lily's Hogwarts life. The day that Sirius Black spilled the beans about the Whomping Willow.

We should have known Sirius would lose it like that after Snape said that about James' family. James himself doesn't think much of Snape, he says he's only a pile of human meat with only envy and maliciousness resting inside of him, so Severus didn't faze James in the least. But Sirius' temper is so different.

He loved James' family dearly, as much as his own, and I thought it was actually very disturbing when all he did when Severus spoke the words was look at him crossly and walk off.

For hours, I felt his hatred boiling as though it were a deadly potion simmering over a low flame until it came to boiling point.

And come to boiling point it did.

Right after dinner, as I was making my way to the Head Boy and Girl dormitories (without James because it's a full moon) I felt it. I was living it the very moment it was playing. Sirius, with still some time left over before having to go meet Remus, waited for Severus. When he came...it was awful.

I saw his face, full of a rage that I'd never have thought possible in him, he spat at him if he was serious in his pursue of them, since he still hadn't figured out how to get past the blasted tree.

Severus didn't answer. He stayed expressionless, the way he always does when he's offended. And Sirius smiled. The ugliest smile I'd ever see on his face.

"It's easy to get past the Willow," his tone was so malicious, so unlike him, that I was trying to convince myself that it wasn't him. But it was. Oh, it was! And he'd just told Severus of the knot to immobilise the tree.

Dazed as I was from all the hate and spitefulness of the vision, I didn't have time to waste. I ran as fast as I could, crossing the entire length of the school as quickly as I could get my legs to carry me, out on the courtyard, and down the passage of the tree. Ahead of me, I could hear Severus. He didn't have a great lead, but he was nearly at the door. I could hear Remus, fully transformed, and excited. He'd

smelled the blood of an enemy, and it was enticing the predator that ruled in these nights. I'd never be able to make it on time, and if I did, there was very little chance that I might live past a werewolf's hunger for blood.

He was howling and scratching at the door, and I could hear the sounds of a dog (Sirius, who was now seriously regretting what he'd done) trying to hold him back, and a deer, I could hear James. He was pushing Remus back, and winning. James was the strongest out of all of them, but when I reached the end of the tunnel, and saw Severus' hand going to open the door, I never thought I could feel that much fear. Especially when Severus was knocked down on the floor by a gigantic creature.

Severus lost his consciousness, which was a good thing. It wasn't Remus, it was James in his Animagus form. He'd managed to push Remus back enough to allow himself the time and space to go through the opening and close it again. He transfigured back into himself, and we both did quick work sending all the locking and strengthening spells we could remember at the door. To keep Remus back until his blood thirst dissipated.

James asked me what happened, and I told him everything as he put a levitating charm on Severus to get him back safely to the Hospital Wing. We didn't know what excuse we'd use once back in school, and even less when Severus might wake up, but we found that the latter was unnecessary. He'd been awake and listening to my retelling.

I hadn't said anything about James' or the others' Animagi forms, but I did say that Remus was a werewolf, and he probably would have figured it out on his own, since he said he'd seen the creature inside the walls of the Shrieking Shack.

The rest of the night was so full of distraught emotions as we sat before Madame Pomfrey and Professor McGonagall and Dumbledore, trying to come up with something that didn't sound completely horrible, that I really don't recall anything that was said at all.

I remember Severus repeated continuously that Sirius, along with Remus, should have been expelled, and James, too. There was arguing. And then, somehow, Dumbledore managed to get Severus to understand that now, he was in life debt to James.

I don't think Sirius will be expelled, because Severus, in an attempt to hide the fact that he'd actually been trying to find out what was going on, hadn't given very strong reasons for Sirius to leave the school, but Severus is very bitter, and Sirius is in a sea of guilt at the moment. I could feel it all the way in the Hospital Wing, even if he was in Hogsmeade.

I do know that James felt very betrayed, and Remus will too, when he finds out. I know the three of them will get past this moment, but there will be another one in the future that will take a very long time to mend.

As for Severus, he's just passed the point of no return.

He can't be saved anymore. At least not now.

Maybe in the future, but I can't help him anymore.

Someone else will have to bring him to us.

The trio was quiet again. They knew that when Sirius was provoked, and had time to think about the provocation (if it was a serious one) he could become scary and vengeful, but they would have never believed that he would just tell Snape how to get killed. True, he probably didn't think it would kill him. When mad, Sirius thought very little. He probably thought that he would only get really scared and leave them alone from then on, but it was exactly that irresponsible behaviour that probably got Remus to believe that his friend had betrayed the Potters. Hadn't that incident happened, there could have been a possibility in which Sirius might have been believed in.

None of them, however, chose to speak of it.

"It's late," Harry said suddenly, "and tomorrow we're going to Hogsmeade," he informed. He stood suddenly, his face pulled in what

was a mixture of disbelief, anger, and hurt. "I'm going to sleep," he finished suddenly, and the two only watched as he made his way up to his dormitory.

o*o

The following day, they were making their way into the alleyway that hid the small library. Hermione said that, if she ever wanted a light reading that didn't have to do with research, that was the place to go...at least for her light reading, but she still hadn't figured out who Jenna could have been out of them. The only people working there were three women, but they were all in the Lily's age range. It was obvious that Jenna had changed her name. The question was why?

The library was very tiny, and nearly completely impossible to find. Hermione had stumbled into one of the workers one day when a shipment of books had come in back in forth year. If it hadn't been for that, she might have never found it.

Walking in, she was pleased to see Jeanine, her favourite out of the three ladies working there, was the only one working at that time. Jeanine gave Hermione one of her usual smiles, but blanched upon noticing Harry's tall head come in behind hers.

She looked ready to pass out.

They all knew, they had just found Jenna.

She didn't say hello, or give them any notice that she wanted them to speak either. She just stared, and then, without a word, she went to the back of the shop. Harry was afraid that his presence might have offended her, that looking at him had brought her painful memories of a past that couldn't be salvaged, but, just when he was about to call Ron and Hermione out of the shop, Jenna came back, carrying a book similar to Lily's diary. Red leather bound, thick, and heavy. And it was written in Lily's hand.

"I knew you'd come for this sometime this year," she spoke more to herself, referring to the diary that had been kept in the time capsule,

"I just didn't think it would be this soon." She mumbled, almost apologetically.

She placed the book directly in Harry's hands, and his fingers automatically clutched at it. Thoughts, not very pleasant thoughts, began to formulate in his mind as he held it securely in his palms. What if she had known? What if she'd given her life for his on purpose? What if she'd sacrificed herself long before the day came? What if he'd been the one to push her to an early death before he was even a person? What if she'd already known she wouldn't have a choice?

Jenna seemed to read his mind.

"Lily..." her voice had started out shaky, quivering. She cleared her throat. "She knew a long time ago that she would only live a short time," Harry's face darkened. "Because she chose it so," that had not, at all, been expected on Harry's part, and his surprise and shock was evident on his face. "Her visions always had two outcomes. I know, she used to tell me everything. And I've read this journal. Here, she only writes of one of them, because even then, she'd chosen to give her life for yours," she offered in explanation, but she'd felt it hadn't been enough. "She chose to give her life for yours, Harry, and she's happy with her choice," her voice was strong, and sad as she spoke this, but more convincing than anyone might have expected. "I don't know what happened that night exactly," she began again, and it was clear that the lack of knowledge of what happened tore at her, "but I'm sure James is happy you're here, too. I think, with him being so close to Lily and all, he knew that it would either be you or him," as she finished speaking this, she knew it wouldn't be of great comfort, but she knew it to be the truth.

"He knew," Harry said suddenly, but with a certainty that was almost eerie. "He...went first. To give us time to run." His words were short, quiet, like they had been when he'd spoken to Dumbledore. "And then she gave her life," he concluded with finality.

Hermione's surprised voice gave away all her concern when she softly spoke his name in worry. "Harry..."

"I still hear them sometimes," he explained. "Especially when I'm around Dementors. I hear that night, I see green, then pain...and then nothing...just Voldemort laughing," Hermione's eyes were brimming with tears just watching Harry's back turned to hers, looking down at the journal, his voice hushed.

"I've read the prophecies, Harry," Jenna repeated. "In all of them, Lily spoke of herself as not there, because she'd already chosen," she told him again. "You see, she knew that she and James would...perish together." She made that point painstakingly clear. "He was her light," she continued quietly, "and you became one too once you were born. She always told me that she would give herself gladly to keep the light from dimming," she said, one of her hands going to touch his messy hair. She felt connected to him, maybe because he had Lily's eyes, maybe because he looked so much like James...maybe both. Harry didn't move away from her. "I see you have a light, too," she said to him, and his eyes snapped up at her in shock, waiting for her to explain herself. She didn't. "Keep your light from dimming, and both you and your parents will be happy," she'd made it clear that it was to be the end of their conversation. Quietly, the Trio left the library, with the extra weight of the journal, and Jenna's words, on their hearts.

Ron dismissed himself quickly saying he had to meet Krista, and Harry and Hermione were left alone with the thick journal, each drowning in their own thoughts. Hermione was the first to speak, albeit uncertainly. "Harry..." she began, "what you said...about remembering...and...hearing...that night..."

"It's all true," he confirmed with an edge to his tone.

"Since when?" Her eyes were glued to the cobbles beneath their feet as she asked. She had only heard of this once, right before their fight broke out on Christmas day, back in third year. But it hadn't been like this. He'd been angry then, angry at Sirius, because he thought that his godfather had betrayed his parents. It wasn't the cold sadness that he now had while speaking of it.

He sighed. Deeply. "A lot in third, and then on and off since then," he replied, his voice devoid of expression.

So, even then, it had been like that, but his anger had been stronger than the pain. A thought struck Hermione. "If we weren't so...mad...at each other, back in third..." she began again, "would you have told me?" She asked nervously. She felt as though she was the only one left out. Ron hadn't seemed shocked at all when Harry confessed what he did. Did Harry tell him? Or had Ron heard him speak in his sleep?

Harry knew that what she was asking was different from that time before their fight over the Firebolt. It was different for him, too. He answered her with another question. "Why should I burden you like that?"

Her reply was sharp and quick. "Because you shouldn't burden yourself!"

Harry didn't get a chance to answer, because they both heard Jenna calling his name from behind them. He turned to her. "Yes?" He asked, inciting her to tell him whatever it was that had made her come out of her shop and look for him.

"I just wanted to tell you this," she began, and her tone promised nothing good. "Even though you were your parents' light, at this moment, if you didn't turn to your light and take it, you will dim," there was no denying the absolute certainty in her voice.

He knew all too well what she was talking about, but he couldn't do what she was telling him to. "I can't take that light."

"Why?" Her question was almost indignant.

"Because she fears what the darkness in me could bring," he told her, almost enigmatically.

She understood, however. "The light, Harry, will always overpower the darkness, and yours is so strong," she said this with a proud smile.

"But it still fears me," was his quick reply.

"She doesn't need to, though. The scar will protect you," she sounded crazy when she said that.

"The scar bonds me to Voldemort," he spit back sharply.

"Yes," she confirmed. "But it's even more strongly bonded to Lily," there was no denying the tone of her voice.

Not knowing what to say, he asked a question. "How do you know my light?"

She smiled at him, like a proud aunt would to her favourite nephew. "I've been watching you, Harry, ever since fourth year, when you started coming so much to Hogsmeade," she told him. "Your eyes, when you look at her...you have the same look that Lily had when she watched James," she explained.

"It's a very beautiful thing, Harry," she complimented him. "Don't let it pass you by. Don't let it slip away from you." Her words influenced so much that he was almost compelled to take her advice.

Almost.

To be continued.

Author's ramblings: I've got a couple of things I should apologise for. One, sorry I didn't get this out sooner, but I didn't get any computer access at all for nearly four days, so that slowed me down considerably. Second, the part of the diary where Lily spoke of what happened down at the Whomping Willow, well, I know it's probably unlikely, but I just think it went like that (especially since Lily's a Seer, here), and towards the end it gets confused because her senses are going into overdrive because of all the emotions she's picking up from other people, although, I do admit, it's a little TOO confused. If you think I should fix it, just tell me, and I'll work on it. Oh, and some new comers to the story find Cicciobello disturbing. I'm sorry, but that's just the way I think a doll with the semblance of a baby toddler turned demon from two of the Marauders would act like, so I'm not likely to change him.

Anyway, if you have any comments, criticism, flames, you can find me at [\[link\]](#), or simply leave a review. It'll get to me anyway, and I'll have a BBQ.

Thanks for reading so far.

Pearl

Every parent leaves something behind for their children to remember them by. Lily Evans didn't know, when she left her diary behind, that it would help her son into knowing her and himself...or did she?

Disclaimer: You already know what do and what I don't own. Let's move on.

Anime Ambreen and Poke' Manic: I think you missed the last part of that chapter, because Snape threw the diary in Hermione's face right before they left, so yeah, they have it, and as for Ciccibello, well, you'll find out in the end ^.^ The-darn-cat: If you remember, Lily already mentioned visions of Harry saving his life to save his own, but, yeah, prophecies aren't usually supposed to be very clear, now, are they? But basically, what I was trying to say is that Harry has to let Hermione, his light, in, or he might be in a heap of trouble ^____^'. And now that we have that cleared: on with the fic!

Harry Potter and the Knowledge of a Mother

Chapter 11: Code name: Marauders

It was an unseasonably warm, sunny afternoon of March, and, after having decided that he didn't wish for the company of his incredibly tedious House mates—which he used to enjoy very much, and for some unknown reason suddenly started finding annoying—Draco Malfoy sat with his back against a tree trunk facing the lake, in one of its most secluded spots, with none other than Ginny Weasley. He didn't know why lately he felt compelled to spend more time with her, but that day, he'd felt the need to speak with her, and had sent his hawk to give her The Parchment, telling her that he wished to see her in that spot.

So there they were, watching the giant squid lazily tracing his tentacles on the lakes surface, not speaking a word. Not that it was uncomfortable, on the contrary, but there was something that had been nagging at the back of his mind for a while—maybe because soon IT would happen, and he didn't know whether to put a stop to it or not—and he felt the need to speak.

His voice seemed to become a part of the quiet, lazy day. "Do you remember the letter that I sent to you on Christmas? What I asked you?" He inquired in a whisper, his eyebrows knit in thought.

She looked at him calmly, as though she'd expected that the question would come sooner or later. "Yes," her tone was just as hushed as his, "but tell me again," it was almost a plea.

"Do you..." he started, but trailed off, almost scared to actually say the words out loud. He cleared his throat. "Do you still think I can be saved?" He saw a small smile borne on her lips.

"More than ever," she told him, her smile becoming a grin, yet her expression clouded over with a thought. "But do you...want to be...saved?" If he didn't wish to change his life, than it was a lost cause.

He didn't answer. Instead, he stood and began to leave with a quick, "I better go."

Worry began to claim her. "Draco!" She called to him urgently.

He stopped, and half turned to look at her, his expression pleading. "Don't make me answer that," he begged. "Answering...it would be betraying my family," and with that he walked off.

Ginny took that as a positive reply.

o*o

"Harry," Hermione said, her tone not very pleasant at all.

He flinched. For the past couple of months she'd taken that tone with him often, and he'd never given in to her, but he knew her to be very stubborn. He knew he couldn't avoid it forever, but he tried.

"Let's go finish the diary," his suggestion sounded actually far more like a quiet but firm command.

She, however, deliberately tried to disobey. "Harry," she began with a tone of reprimand, "we've had our ups and downs, you know that. But I wish you would have told me exactly what was going on."

There it was again. Still upset with him because he didn't want her to get worked up over the fact that he heard his parents die when he was around dementors, and, very often, in his sleep. He had told her, back in third year, yet he understood that when he'd confessed it back in those days, he hadn't quite made out to be what it was. "What's the point?" He asked bitterly. "It would have only made you worry."

"No, Harry," she contradicted with a sad shake of the head. "It would have taken the burden off of you."

"You would have worried," he knew she would have.

"Yes," she relented. "But in our relationship, from the beginning, my job was to worry for you, because you never worried enough," there was a slight smile in her tone when she spoke that, and it reflected itself in her warm topaz eyes even if her expression remained one of reprimand.

He didn't want to argue anymore. "Let's just read."

"Alright," she gave in, knowing very well that she would have thousands of chances to pick the argument back up, like she'd been doing for a long time now. Finally, she was starting to break through his 'hero-trying-to-protect-friends' routine.

They hadn't even begun to read about the antagonism between James and Snape, when the portrait hole swung open so fast it nearly got thrown over its hinges, letting in the twenty some crazy first years whose minds were filled with the one intent of ripping Harry's clothes to shreds. "There he is! I told you he would be here!" Shouted Mary Collins, a tall, thick, flat faced girl that had self nominated her person 'President of the Harry-Potter-Boy-Who-Lived-Quidditch-Star-and-all-around-totally-hot-guy-Fanclub', otherwise known as 'Potter's a babe'.

Harry gave one look at the portrait hole, blocked by the Stalker Mob, the windows—after having contemplated summoning the Firebolt to dash out into the afternoon sky—the stairs leading to the dormitories, and finally Hermione, all within a time span of two seconds. Noticing that the Stalkers were starting to move in on him, he shouted to Hermione, "Wait for me," while jumping over the couch and running up the stairs as quickly as he could. Considering that the staircase wasn't very wide, and that the obsessed pre-teens following him would be trying to deter the others ascent toward him, he should have enough time to duck into one of the younger wizards' dormitories unseen.

He dashed into his old second year dorm room, hid behind a particularly large trunk, and waited for the sounds of multiple heavy footsteps and panting breaths to pass. He heard them outside the door asking each other where he could be. Someone opened said door, glanced quickly inside—while he made himself small behind his hiding spot—told the others that nobody was in there, and followed the others in their stampede to the upper lever of the dorm.

The footsteps sounded far away enough for him to peek out. It looked as though the way was clear. Throwing the door open and dashing down to the Common Room, he reached Hermione within seconds.

"He's down here!" Shouted one of the smaller members of the 'Potter's a babe' Fanclub, who'd obviously been there as a watch guard, and soon they heard the sound of rampaging over-hormonal adolescence making their boisterous descent of the stairs as loudly as they could.

Harry and Hermione exchanged fearful glances, looked at the portrait hole—still open, and this time clear of senile young girls—and made their dash out of it before the others could reach the last landing. They ran down the stairs, Hermione clutching the diary to her, in hopes that they wouldn't ruin it in case they caught them, the Stalkers hot on their heels.

They were moving their feet as quickly as they could, and soon they found themselves in the dungeons, the Pursuers had fallen a little bit behind them. Harry had no intention of letting this opportunity pass

him by. Grabbing Hermione by the wrist, taking her with him around the corner, he pulled into the first open classroom in sight, slammed the door behind him, and started placing every locking charm he'd ever learned from Hermione onto the thick wooden entrance of the room, Hermione adding a few more while she was at it.

They put their ears to the door, and heard them rampage pass the door and all the way down the hallway, to turn into another one without so much as a thought of them hiding in there. They both heaved a heavy sigh, placed their backs against the door, and slid down till they were sitting against the cold marble of the floor, flooded in relief.

They were so relieved, as a matter of fact, that they didn't even realize they'd locked themselves in the classroom adjacent to Snape's office. It seemed, however, that said office must have been unoccupied, because the acid professor didn't come to take advantage of the excellent opportunity to take point off from them.

They sat there, heaving heavy breaths, grins wide on their faces from the successful escape, clothes torn from the various attempts on the Fanclub's part to hold them back, trying to regain their composure.

Hermione turned to give Harry one of her more radiant 'I-know-something-you-don't-know' smiles. He grinned back. "What?" He asked laughing, even though he had an idea of what she might say.

"We," she started, pointing a finger at his face, "were definitely NOT that scary when we were their age," she finished, poking her finger against his nose.

His grin grew, and, after having pulled himself up off the floor, held out his hand for her to stand as well. She took, and a moment later the two were sitting in their usual Potions desk, where they usually took class.

Soon, they were engrossed in Lily's seventh year life. They were nearly finished with the diary, there were couple of weeks till her graduation. They read of her exams, of the antagonism between Snape and the Marauders, which seemed to be increasing daily, and

the graduation fuss, and, of course, of the Grad Ball. Basically, it was the Hogwarts prom.

Lily described her time there with James as one of the happiest days of her life, yet it was very melancholy, because it meant that she was to leave a place that had become home for her. The place that had made her a witch. The place that had given her James. Her home.

Yet, there was something else that she wrote of regarding that Ball. She wrote of Snape.

I felt very sorry for Severus at the dance. He was there, with the Slytherins, and he looked angrier and more upset than ever. And he was sad. I could feel it radiating off of him so strongly, it was as though I could see it. Even though I know that I could never bring myself to love him, I couldn't stop myself from wondering if, during last, my going with him to the Solar Crowning Ball would have made a difference, if it would have pushed him to make different choices, and, conceited as it may sound, I think it would have. But, in all honesty, I couldn't have gone with him knowing what James and I had been mutually feeling toward each other for so long.

I loved James, and I love him more with every passing day, and dancing with Severus, knowing that I could have been James, would have, to put it simply, killed me.

Not having James is like not having the best part of myself.

Silence ensued.

Hermione sniffed lightly, but with the quiet that had befallen them it was unmistakable, and Harry couldn't help but ask. "Did you ever feel that way?"

She looked at him, honesty openly revealed in her eyes. "Every day since my life here at Hogwarts started," she'd never spoken anything truer.

Harry asked another question. "Do you think it's possible to fall in love at eleven?"

She smirked. "I'm sure your fan club would agree," she told him mirthfully, trying to lighten the heavy mood.

He remained serious. His eyes honest, open, and searching hers. "Do you?"

She looked down at the diary in her hands, searching in Lily's words, hoping they would give her an answer, but it was already within her. "Yes," she stated firmly. "I'm sure people can fall in love at age eleven," a small smile graced her face. "It just takes them a while to realize it."

Another pause, and then Harry spoke again. "I should have told you," he said enigmatically.

Hermione's heart jumped in her throat. "What?" She asked, hope swelling in her heart.

"That, sometimes, I still hear my parents dying," Harry replied quietly, but she was glad that he was finally letting her in on this, even if he seemed reluctant.

"Yes, you should have," she told him with a desperate sigh, "but I understand why you didn't."

He couldn't keep the smile from growing. "Dinner's over by now," he told her suddenly. "Want to go to the kitchens before heading back?"

"Yes," she replied, a smile borne on her face as well, "but we ought to hurry to bed. Tomorrow we have training," she reminded him.

"Well," he told her impishly, "maybe it'll be the last time," he sounded hopeful.

She smiled at him. "May be."

And with that they proceeded to take off all the locking charms they'd placed on the door so they could leave. The task was hard and

tedious, but the two were laughing and joking with the other, and once opened, they walked out the door with companionable giggled.

If they had looked back, their laughter would have died, because they would have seen professor Snape—who had been listening since they first entered, hoping to catch them doing something worthy of punishment—stone faced and angry as always, watching the now empty doorways with his arms crossed over his chest, and knit eyebrows.

o*o

"Mr Weasley," McGonagall reprimanded the redhead, voice stern and angry, lips thin, "I will not let you leave this classroom or move onto you fellow students until I see a full transformation from you," she finished in a huff.

"Oh, come on, Minerva," Sirius stepped in, trying to get her to go easy on the boy who looked ready to break down in crisis. He'd been using her first name since he'd come back to the castle. "It took us Marauders three years to do it!" He reminded her.

It seemed to anger her, though. "Yes, Mr Black," she snapped at him, letting him know that one more word would get him in trouble, thanks to the use of his last name. "But if I'm well informed, you were without mentoring and with a handicap like Pettigrew to slow you down." She humphed.

"Ah, well..." Sirius didn't have an excuse for that.

She wasn't done, however. "They have two mentors," she reminded him, "and will, therefore, transfigure fully before they leave this class." Her tone was final.

"Which may be never," Sirius informed her tartly.

She gave another humph, and turned to Ron again, looking more menacing than she'd ever looked before. Mr Weasley!" Her shout nearly made him faint. "Again!" She ordered, and for the world of her, she looked like a traded slave driver with whip in hand and in position.

Ron, not liking the idea of being whipped, even if it was only imaginary, decided to appease her, or at least try to. Finally, after five hours of incessant training with McGonagall on his back, he felt the world becoming bigger around him. He felt his mouth and nose lengthening, his torso becoming longer, his limbs becoming short and stubby, his clothes turning into fur. He kept his eyes closed for a long time after the transformation, when Sirius, Harry, and Hermione's giggles couldn't be contained anymore.

"What?" He asked confused, yet not sure that they heard him since he seemed to make an unusual animalistic sound, rather than form a word.

"Malfoy would love this!" Harry exclaimed, and, with that, picked up a hand mirror off the teacher's desk, and snoopied down, since Ron was almost at floor level, placing it in front of his eyes so that he could see what he had turned into.

Ron was horrified. He was truly horrified. Out of all the creature that walked the wizarding and muggle worlds, he had to turn into this! Something must have been absolutely wrong. Maybe McGonagall forgot to tell him something vital...maybe he had just seen wrong, maybe the world was coming to an end, but for the life of him, WHY did he have to turn into a WEASEL! Anything! Anything! But not a WEASEL! And a RED WEASEL to top it off!

Malfoy had better never find out about this or else.

"Very well, Mr Weasel," McGonagall punned, "you may transfigure back," she told him. Turning to Hermione, she told her to try morphing.

Ron, now back in his 'Weasley' form, was rather upset with her, not only did Hermione make in on her first try, as was her usual, she outdid his weasel by several long...long miles.

"Oh, good Heavens!" They heard McGonagall exclaim in shocked surprise.

Hermione did not expect that reaction out of her. It wasn't usually easy to surprise the Transfiguration teacher. She took to examining herself in an attempt to figure out what she might have been. Her mouth and nose had lengthened, and to her, looked almost canine, yet she couldn't be sure. Looking down, she noticed she must have been a rather large animal, thin, elegant and graceful, with a long neck, and lush golden fur. That was nice, but it didn't help her into figuring out what she was. And then she noticed them. The four long, plush golden tails with unusual black markings on the tip.

Oh, Merlin! She thought to herself. She couldn't see her own face, but she knew that if she were standing in front of a mirror she would have seen herself as a fox-wolf, with the iris of her topaz eyes fade to a nearly blind white around the pupil, her ears, shaped like the Elves, would be sleeked against the side of her head, and in between her eyebrows with the same markings as her tail, she would see, small, and placed in the shape of a four-sided-star the symbols of the four elements.

She was a Volpegea! The magical creature capable of reading human thought and with the power embedded in her tail to control the elements—wind above all. Almost as though needing to try out her transfigured powers, she whipped one of her tails, making the locked room hiss with a strong, powerful gust of wind.

There was no doubt. She was a Volpegea.

McGonagall told her to transfigure back into herself, and she did so effortlessly. Her mind was blown. She was a Volpegea. She looked to Harry, who was proud and surprised with her amazing transfiguration. If she had turned into something that powerful, what would Harry be turning into? Oh, but a Volpegea! In all her studying, she had found out that nobody had ever managed to transform into such a powerful animal. At least, nobody who was registered. Oh, Harry, what will you turn into?

Still dazed, Hermione barely heard McGonagall issuing Harry the command to transfigure, but when she saw him concentrate her attention was centred on him. For a second he seemed to struggle, unable to find the right amount of concentration, and then, like magic,

his clothes turned into feathers, his hair following suit, his face and hands covering with them as well, his mouth and nose turning into a sleek, black beak, his legs became bird like, growing talons, his arms and back turning into gigantic wings.

He looked like a black hawk, except that he'd stayed his own size. He was still over two meters tall. There were white feathers drawing a circle around his eyes, looking very much like the round spectacles he'd worn before. His eyes themselves were a beautifully eerie, iridescent green, so bright Hermione thought they might blind her.

Since he'd stayed the same size, he was almost afraid he hadn't transfigured at all, but when he tried to raise his arms to look at himself, he found sleek, ebony, feather-covered wings extending more than twice his height on both sides of him. They were so wide that, in the small classroom, he couldn't open them more than halfway.

"What am I?" He wondered out loud, not expecting anyone to understand him, since usually birds could only squaw and things. Yet they all heard him.

"A Wingadeus," McGonagall whispered, stiff as a board, falling backwards until she hit the floor with a loud and not at all graceful *thump*. She had fainted.

"A what?" Harry mumbled, or tried to without moving his beak, completely surprised that he'd received an answer.

"A Wingadeus," Hermione repeated, coming close to pet one of his wings, which were soft perfect under her touch. "It's a magical creature believed to be extinct for several centuries now," she told him. "They're invisible in flight, even during day light, and they speak every language that was ever spoken on the planet. They're also telekinetic, and some people thought they could influence the weather," she wasn't sure about the last one, but everything else was absolutely true.

"Very good, Miss Granger," they heard Dumbledore's voice coming from one of the portraits in the room. It must have been connected to his office. "I couldn't have said it better myself," and, walking over to place a comforting hand on Hermione's shoulder he told her, "I believe the Volpegea's power will be of great use to him."

How long had he been there? How did he know she was a Volpegea.

Sirius still seemed to be in shock as he brought McGonagall back to her senses by squeezing Cicciobello's stomach over her face so that the doll released the largest, most vile smelling amount of gas they had ever smelt, right over the professor's nose. He'd been hiding the doll under his robes, waiting all day to be able to pull that one of the teacher. McGonagall awoke instantly, trying to choke her way past the smell.

Harry transfigured back to his original form, noticing that his transfiguration teacher kept on looking dizzy whenever she looked at him. Dumbledore began to speak to them.

"As of right now, whenever referring to your animal counterparts, you shall use specific names. Mr Weasley," Ron stood straighter, "you are Whiskers," the redhead deflated instantly. "Miss Granger; your name will be WindTail," Hermione beamed. "Mr Potter, you are Falcospeak," Harry nodded.

"Professor Dumbledore," Hermione began to ask, "there was a precise reason for which we've undergone this training, isn't there?" It didn't really sound like a question at all, but rather like a statement.

"Precisely, Miss Granger," Dumbledore nodded. "You are to be...spies, so to speak. You will keep watch of the grounds when I ask you to, and, sometimes, investigate anything you can, taking advantage of your new possibilities. Is that clear, Marauders?"

"Marauders?!" The trio exclaimed in unison.

"That is to be your code name," he told them, his eyes twinkling.

Sirius couldn't keep the smile off his face.

To be continued.

Author's ramblings: Well, I actually thoroughly enjoyed writing that, and I hope you liked reading it just as much. The only thing I'm not at all happy with are the names I gave their Animagus forms (I only like Hermione's), if anybody had any suggestions, please, hand them out, and if I like them, I'll use them and give you credit. Anyhow, did you like it, hate it, do you want to praise me for my splendid prose or would you rather flame me into next kingdom come? Go ahead, I like BBQs. In any case, please tell me what you thought at or simply leave a review.

Thanks for reading

Pearl

Every parent leaves something behind for their children to remember them by. Lily Evans didn't know, when she left her diary behind, that it would help her son into knowing her and himself...or did she?

Disclaimer: You know the drill, let's get over with it.

To the reviewers:

Venus: You are the first who sent me a flame, and I'll let you know I had a wonderful BBQ with it, but I advice you to think a little more before telling off someone just because you don't like the fact that they paired up H/Hr and you don't like the coupling (just a piece of advice). Andza: there is a reason for why I made Harry a bird. Yami's girl forever: A volpegea should be the size of a big wolf. Chibi-zan: thanks for your suggestions, Hermione will definetely be changed to "Tailwinds" now. Sarah: Thank you very much for your wonderfully constructive review. I'll do my best. Blue Tiki: Yes, Cicciobello has a purpose...it just seems to get lost among his nastyness (after all you have to remember that he was created by James and Sirius when they were 10 *shudders*). Gwenyvere: Well, McGonagall's Animagus form is part Kneazle, which is a magical creature, so I don't think it's impossible for Harry and Hermione to have those shapes, especially because I think they are both a lot more powerful than they both realize. Erenriel: Thank you for your suggestions. And to those that pointed out the whole "Mugblood/Mudblood" mistake. Sorry, but I've read only the Italian translations of the book, so I didn't know the precise word and I went by instinct. When I'll edit this I'll change it. Thank you.

As for the names of Ron and Harry's forms there were a couple of good suggestions, and I thought I'd have you choose (although if I don't get a response I'll leave them as they are, so you better tell me ^_^). For Ron: Squeaks (suggested by Erenriel the Elven Canuck) or Sneaker (by Chiby-zan) or he could just stay Whiskers. For Harry: Peregrin or Pippin (Still by Erenriel) or he could just stay Falcospeak because some of you seemed to like it.

Now, for this chapter, it's really short compared to my other ones, and it's pretty much anticlimatic. It's actually only the first half of what it was supposed to be, but I decided to split this chapter in half for plot

purposes. OH, and I'll let you know that it's really hard for me to live in a family who tries to spoil book 5 for me at every chance they get, but I'm still holding up as best as I can. I already know that in OotP a war starts, but here it hasn't yet, so remember that this is totally an alternate universe at this point.

Thank you, and now, on with the fic:

Harry Potter and the Knowledge of a Mother

Chapter 12: Foreboding

Strange things kept on happening in Riddle home. Strangely clothed people had been going in and out for the past two years or so, unusual displays of eerie light, the disappearance of the caretaker...the villagers were scared. Which was exactly why they simply stayed clear of the property and acted as though nothing out of the usual was happening at all.

And He Who Must Not Be Named rather liked it that way. Those stupid Muggles were so worried about their own self preservation they didn't even have the courage to come see what destruction this home would bring, so that when it would strike, it would fall upon them like a thunder shower, and all they warning they would have would be the big black clouds forming quickly on the horizon. Even the forces of order didn't dare step near the house, the fact that nobody had openly reported any unusual activity as their excuse.

The time for their breach was near, though Wormtail, his snivelling servant, didn't seem to agree. The coward.

"They have eyes everywhere," he sniffed, rubbing his hands together nervously, his silver one gleaming a cold white in light of the fireplace.

Stupid mouse. "We shan't be seen," the voice that spoke was cold, hissing, smooth, and the purest form of evil, coming from a hooded figure, standing before the fire, a gigantic snake huddled at its feet.

It wasn't enough reassurance for the balding, short, plump man. There were people there who wanted nothing but his head. "How?"

"I have thought of it," was the elusive answer.

"But what of Malfoy?" The pale man asked. Lucius Malfoy had been quite a source of worry in the past couple of years. The Ministry was watching him far too closely.

"He has eluded questioning thrice. He will last till the attack," another bewildering question, but it was all he would give.

Still, the nervous man wasn't satisfied. "What of his son?" That had been a true source of worry to their entire line. "He's been teetering."

"He's of little use now." Was he though? Could he be of use to their targets?

"How will we breach?" The man snivelled again.

"We are nearly ready for the attack." That wasn't an answer, but it made Wormtail swallow in an in vane attempt at clearing a lump of fear out of his throat.

o*o

"Harry, what's wrong?"

Harry took his eyes off of Cicciobello, who was having a grand time telling the Great Hall of how Snape's first kiss had to spit on the floor all the amount of saliva he'd left in her mouth, and turned his attention to Hermione, who had issued the question. It was better not to worry her. "Huh?" He tried to sound nonchalant. "Nothing."

"Don't lie to me," she commended annoyed. "You've been edgy for months."

What was the point of hiding anything from her? "I've been...having...feelings..." he ventured.

Ron perked up at this enough to ask, with his mouth full of stuffed chicken, "Like?" Harry's tone wasn't really leading him into believing

that Harry was about to confess his undying love to their best friend, so it must have been something else worthy of almost as much interest.

"My scar..." not a good beginning, "it crawls...all the time."

"Oh!" Ron mumbled, his mouth gaping open, letting the chicken tumble out.

"Now it's humming," Harry added.

"That doesn't sound good," Ron replied, his mouth now devoid of food.

"It isn't," Harry's reply was quick and clear.

"Did you tell Dumbledore?" Hermione asked worried.

"Yes," this time the answer was slow, thoughtful, and almost unwilling, as though he didn't wish to tell them.

"What did he say?" A pox on cleverly curious women!

"They're...preparing an attack," he mumbled, almost inaudibly, yet they both heard clearly enough.

"What?" Ron's high pitched squeal made the entire tables eardrums ring from abuse.

"Oh, honestly Ron!" Hermione huffed. "It was obvious! Otherwise, why the Duel Training?"

"Because you should always good to know how to defend yourself," he replied quickly. That's what the teacher had been telling everyone, anyhow.

"Especially when war's about to start," Hermione's open answer was almost brutal for Ron. He practically felt a physical blow.

"But they don't have enough followers yet!" Ron was certain of this. His father's ties in the Ministry were still strong.

"No, they don't," a swell of hope bubbled within the redhead, "but they have enough to make a complete breach of the school. Once they do that, and they get Dumbledore out of the way, recruiting more people will be so easy for them they'd have an army in less than a month," the bubble of hope burst before it was even borne.

Harry agreed with her. "Yeah, and they'll attack soon."

Ron swallowed. "How soon?"

"Easter at the latest," he answered. "It's a good thing we manage to finish our transfiguration so soon."

"What do you mean?" The redhead was lost.

"Don't you get it?" Hermione asked exasperated. "We trained so we could survey Hogwarts!"

"You mean, watch guard?" Ron asked confused.

"Yes. I'm sure they've thought of a way to breach, though they haven't gone through it yet. Hogwarts has a lot of wards and charms protecting it. To breach they'd need a lot of people. It's not easy getting such a crowd around here without drawing attention to it. They have to be patient, and when the time comes, they'll be quiet," Hermione explained. "If we keep watch we have time to warn the castle, and organize a defence."

"Dumbledore didn't tell me anything, but I'm sure he's got something planned already," Harry put in.

"Oh," Ron didn't seem to be cheered by this in the least.

o*o

Turning over on the blanket covering the Astronomy Tower's cold floor that they were laying on, Krista draped her arm over Ron's

unusually stiff form. Something was bothering him badly. Sometime around lunch he began seriously worrying about something, but he didn't seem to want to tell her. Maybe it was something important. Harry and Hermione had seemed very worried lately, and very edgy as well. Maybe they'd told him what they knew. Dragging her body up along his so that they were at eye level she asked. "What's bothering you?"

He seemed surprised that she noticed his state of mind. He shouldn't have been. Krista had been observing him and his friends for so long that she could guess what they were feeling with just a simple glance. "Nothing," he tried to sound truthful.

"Is it something with...You-Know-Who?" She asked, her eyebrows raised with worry.

His own shot up in surprise. "How'd you know?"

She shrugged. "I noticed Harry's been touching his scar a lot," she replied matter of factly. "Every time that happened you usually all ended up in the hospital wing," she told him with a small laugh.

He chuckled, too, but sobered very quickly. Too quickly for Ron. "Don't tell anybody," he didn't sound menacing. He sounded truly worried. Something big was bound to happen soon. The trio of them looked like they were afraid it would all fall on them within moments, and they weren't sure whether or not they could keep it from crushing them.

She wasn't upset that he asked her that. She knew he did only to be absolutely certain that the news wouldn't spread past the two of them, and the other couple. "I won't," she reassured him, "but are you okay with it?"

Ron didn't answer right away. "I'm scared," that much was obvious, "but I don't risk too much," and it was true. In fact, he could almost be considered an outsider to all this compared to his friends. Like always. "I don't risk like Harry," he finished.

A mask of confusion crossed her face. "What do you mean?"

"Soon...maybe too soon, Harry's going to have to face him," Ron was truly worried for his friend.

Krista held him even more tightly to her body. "Don't worry," she reassured him, "Hermione will make him live," she sounded like she knew the deepest secret of the world, yet, for the life of her, Ron knew she wasn't going to tell him.

It didn't matter.

She'd never been wrong before. He trusted her to be right this time as well.

o*o

Ginny was worried. Malfoy had been acting stranger than usual. She'd been watching him at the Slytherin table for the past few days, more than she usually did. He ate by himself. Little by little he'd alienated himself from the members of his house, including Crabbe and Goyle, and now that his mates were starting to notice it, they were getting angry. She could see them all conspiring against him, only a few seats down from his own.

He was completely aware of it, of course, yet he chose not to acknowledge it, which irritated the rest of the Slytherins even further.

He was avoiding her, too.

For quite the duration of the week, he never spoke to her, he didn't write to her, he didn't even look like he knew she existed. And it hurt. Had she done something wrong? Something to upset him? Well, if that was the case, she wanted to know what it was. She wasn't going to let him alienate her without a good reason.

The second she saw him stand up and leave the Hall, she shot out of there like a bat out of hell, hot on his heels. Thankfully, the halls were deserted.

He was waiting for her around a corner.

"If you want to follow someone you should try to be less obvious," it wasn't one of his sharp taunts. He actually sounded resigned.

"Why have you been avoiding me?" She was upset with him. One day they were confidants, the next they were strangers. She didn't want it to be like that.

"Because," he said the word as though it were the solution to ever inquisition the world would ever see.

Not enough for her. "Because," she probed him on.

"Because when I'm around you I feel like everything that we worked for in the last years is worthless," he replied. She'd never heard him so depressed. So full of self-loathing. And who was we?

She was confused, and a little scared at what that might have meant. "What do you mean, Draco?" The use of his first name seemed to depress him even more.

"If you knew that someone important to you," he began, stepping closer to her, "was about to do something that you used to want, that you help to get, but that now you think is wrong..." should he continue? "What would you do?"

She was a little intimidated by the desperation of his voice, and the anguish that she'd never thought she'd see on his face. "Depends," she replied breathlessly.

"On what?"

"On how important that person is for me, and how wrong I think that act might be," her response was quick, and he guessed it came from the knowledge of what her twin brothers used to pull on people. He suspected quite a few times that they planned dangerous pranks and she spoke them out of them. "And on how much I love that person," she added.

"I don't love that person," he told her quickly. "But I can't defy him either."

He was scared. "I can't tell you what to do, Draco," she whispered, understanding that he was asking her just that, "and either way, you are going to regret the choice you make," how did she know that? "I can only tell you to choose the one that you'll regret the least. If you do that, maybe one day you'll be happy with your choice."

Now all he had to choose was the lesser of the two evils.

Easier said than done.

o*o

When Ron came back from the Astronomy tower he saw Harry, thrashing in the midst of a nightmare. They'd been frequent lately. It probably had to do with his scar twitching. As he laid down on his bed, he wondered what could possibly be haunting his dreams, and then sleep claimed him.

Harry kept on twitching though, and it was getting worse. He didn't know how it started, all he knew was that he was in the middle of it.

A battle field. No, the Hogwarts courtyard! The castle was at his back, the entrance only a few yards away from him. A storm was forming quickly. Too quickly, it moved so fast over them that it looked like those documentaries where they displayed the growth of a flower in fast forwarded motion. Just like the flower's petals, dark, dangerous black clouds formed atop their heads, quicker than his breath.

He welcomed it, though. He knew it was benevolent toward him.

Bodies were falling at his feet. Some were friends, others were enemies. He was calling out spells, waving his wand, but he didn't know what charms he was using. He couldn't even hear his own voice.

There were students, Death Eaters, Giants.

Teacher defending their pupils, children and teenagers defending bothers, sisters, lovers, friends.

It was a true battle.

And then he heard a laugh.

An all familiar laugh that he wished he would never hear again ringing, carried by the rain, rather than being dampened by it.

He was holding her. Voldemort was holding her. He was holding Hermione.

He was laughing, taunting Harry's hurt and stupefied expression at seeing Hermione's frightened face begging him for help, Voldemort holding his wand against her throat. She would never be able to dodge the spell, and he would never reach her on time. He was too far away.

She was barely able to speak the words. "Harry, the lightning! The lightning, Harry!" and then Voldemort's voice was the only one filling the courtyard, filling it with the sounds of the killing curse, green light, and then nothing but black.

Harry woke up in a cold sweat, his teeth hurt from all the clenching of his jaws, his nails had drawn blood from his hands, but he didn't feel that pain. All he felt was his heart beating and echoing in his ears, his ragged breathing, making him feel like he'd truly lived the battle, and not only dreamt it, Hermione's scream as the green light erupted from Voldemort's wand.

Hermione's terrified expression haunted him for the rest of the night.

To be continued.

Author's note: Just to let you guys know, the sheer amount of reviews for the last chapter absolutely blew my mind, and I was kind of in short circuit at that time, but I did manage to write this and uploaded, even if it is the worst chapter so far. Anyway, if you have any opinion at all on this, please contact me at or simply leave a review.

Thank you

Pearl

PS: You guys rock! Oh, and next chapter should be up by Tuesday

Every parent leaves something behind for their children to remember them by. Lily Evans didn't know, when she left her diary behind, that it would help her son into knowing her and himself...or did she?

Disclaimer: Do you guys really wanna hear another one? Nah, didn't think so. Lets move on.

First off, I really need to thank the wonderful reviewers for giving me 201 reviews for twelve measly chapter and a prologue. You guys rock. And now to answer your questions: Scarab65: I really would regret it if I let Hermione die, now wouldn't I? ^__^ Chibi-zan: You are definitely a very thorough reviewer, and I thank you for your very constructive criticism, but when I planned my story, it was almost meant to be three stories in one, and now we're beginning to step into the second. It has nothing to do with the existence of OotP. In the end, however, it will all come together, so I hope you stick around till then. But you're right, since I'm trying to write as fast as I can, I did drop a lot of my descriptiveness, yet the thing is that if I don't write this as fast as I can, or if I stop myself to go back and try to edit it, I'll lose the will to finish it, so I first want to complete it, and then I'll do a full re-edition. I hope you don't mind. Curly girl: Well, Quidditch won't be part of the picture till very much later on, but Hagrid does show up in this one. I have a problem with writing his way of speaking (because I've only read the books in Italian), so he only speaks indirectly here. If there's anyone out there who wants to help me write him out better, let me know ^_^.

And now: on with the fic.

Harry Potter and the Knowledge of a Mother

Chapter 13: The first missions

That morning, Harry looked awful. He looked like he hadn't slept in ages, and he looked thinner as well. Of course, that could have been because of the inhumane Quidditch practice that he placed himself through everyday, in ever increasing amounts, yet Ron had a feeling that it was a little more than that.

For one thing, Harry wasn't eating. Though Harry was not school famous because of his appetite, like himself, he did, however know how to heartily eat a heavenly house elf prepared breakfast right before practice. The only times Harry turned down food were when he was nervous, such as before a Quidditch match, and Ron knew very well that there weren't any planned for quite a long while. Wistfully he looked out the windows to see the Quidditch pitch, a little cleaner than it had been before, but still infested with the carnivorous beetlesquash. He gave a sigh.

Nope, Quidditch wasn't what had kept his friend from sleep the previous night. It had to be that dream he'd been having. The one that had him tumbling in the sheets, gasping like a drowning man, sweating with the horrible images his mind must have been sending him. Ron was sure he had a pretty good idea of what the nightmare concerned, though not in detail.

Harry had been stealing glances at the female third of their trio the entire morning—who was completely unawares with her nose shoved between the pages of the Visions' Journal that Jenna had given them a while back. Harry's eyes were clouded, sad and desperate whenever they fell on her. He must have been worried that whatever he dreamt had a chance to become true. And, thinking about it, maybe it did. After all, Harry's mother had been a strong Seer, and, rather often, Harry had told them about strange dreams whose outcomes very often had turned out to be valid.

SLAM!

The two were snapped out of their thoughts by the shocking, loud sound of Hermione shutting the journal a little too quickly and strongly. They looked at her to see that childish happy expression that crossed her face whenever she'd run into an argument that required deep, challenging research.

"I have to go to the library," she said giddily, leaving the pair to watch her dash out before they could even reply, her food untouched.

This was definitely the strangest couple he'd ever seen, Ron decided after a moment of contemplation, before going back to his breakfast, therefore allowing Harry to go back to his brooding.

o*o

As Harry pulled up from his deathly dive to catch the Snitch, he noticed Headmaster Dumbledore sitting on the outskirts of the Forever Remember Garden, waiting for him to catch the elusive little ball so that they could pause their practice. He pulled his broom down to stand before him, Ron lending next to him.

"Hello, professor," saluted the two boys simultaneously.

Dumbledore gave them one of his twinkly eyed smiles. "Do you enjoy your improvised practice field?" He asked.

They both doubted that he came all the way over to the Garden simply to ask that, but they humoured him. "Uhm...yeah!" Started Harry. "It's good practice. The mist makes the Snitch harder to see."

"Yeah, and it slows down the brooms so the team's forced to push them harder. Off this field they're really fast," and Ron was about to go on as to what a wonderful training ground that happened to be, when he caught Harry's look and decided to let the Headmaster speak.

Dumbledore turned to Harry. "I'm afraid we have a problem, Harry," before the boy could even get worried, the old wizard reassured him. "Nothing horrible. Just that one of our regular patrollers from the village is very sick, and I need you to fill in for him," Harry relaxed. "I had already decided to ask you to scout the skies a few nights a month, it's a good opportunity to test your new abilities."

Harry nodded. "When do I have to do it?"

"Tonight will be your first watch," Dumbledore informed him. "I'll space your watches far apart as to not burden you too much in your studying. You won't have another one for a couple of weeks to come."

Harry nodded, and Dumbledore walked off to leave them to their practicing.

Hours later, walking up the stairs to reach the Gryffindor tower, sweaty, sore, and all around beat, Ron did what he did best in those moments. He whined. "I wanted to keep first watch," he lamented.

Out of nowhere a voice replied from behind. "I don't think you'll ever keep watch."

"Hermione!" Ron jumped, startled by her sudden appearance. Then he caught on to what she'd said. "What? Why?" He sputtered indignantly.

She shrugged. "Harry and I have powerful forms," she began, "he can even fly without being seen at any hour of the day. We could be able to fight if case asked for it. You wouldn't ever be able to hold against a breach," seeing his disappointed face she added, "you're more adapt at spying."

He perked up at hearing that. "Huh?"

Hermione sighed. "You're small enough that you can move in and out of places quickly without being seen. You could even walk into secret enemy meetings by walking in under someone's cloak. It would be easy for you to sit in a dark spot and listen in on an important conversation. It would be very helpful," she explained. Ron beamed.

"So did you find what you were looking for in the library?" Harry asked, hoping to spend some time with her. Since his nightmare the previous night, he'd been edgy, and had wanted to stay close to her just to see if anything out of the ordinary happened.

"Maybe," she replied, her expression thoughtful, "the pendant you gave me at Christmas was giving a little bit of glow under my blouse while I read, so I think I'm on the right track, I just don't know where to go precisely," she told him. "See you later," she said as she turned a corner in a hallway divergent from theirs.

"Where are you going?" Harry called behind her.

"To see Trelawny," she shouted back as she ran the long way to the Divination Tower.

Ron and Harry looked at each other. "You reckon they'll try to poison each other?" Ron joked, referring to the two women's distaste for each other. Harry just shrugged as he watched Hermione's retreating figure.

o*o

Panting slightly, Hermione opened the door to the Divination classroom as she walked up the stairs, knowing full well that at the time, Trelawny had no lessons and was probably alone. Walking into the room, the suffocating smell that she clearly remembered from her third year—along with the even more suffocating fire—reached her at dizzying speed. Trying to fight back a sneeze while clearing her throat she called out to the teacher that she despised most—even more than Snape—"Professor Trelawny?"

And from behind a veiled curtain she heard the tinkling sound of her exaggerated bracelets, and her veiled voice grating on her nerves already. "Ah, yes, our deserter," Trelawny taunted, giving her a venomous smirk, "my inner eye told me I would see you soon," she announced.

Hermione turned away so the teacher wouldn't notice her rolling her eyes. What a load of codswallop! "I just needed to ask you something as cross reference for an essay I'm writing," Hermione felt the need to specify. There was no way on this magic Earth that would bring her back to this classroom willingly without a good reason.

"And how, exactly, should my fine art help you in one of your essays?" She asked sharply.

Hermione had the strongest urge to say, Well, you're the Seer, shouldn't you know already? But she bit her tongue, and explained. "I need to know a few things about Vatis Divinus. Since his writings are

considered heretic even to other Seers I thought you might know a little more about them. The library has almost nothing on him."

Trelawny stiffened. "I do not speak that heretician's name, nor do I repeat his falsehoods," she sniffed. "Now, leave."

Hermione didn't need to be told twice. Trelawny had just confirmed what she suspected.

Vatis Divinus, once a very prophet Seer, had been marked as heretic when he predicted the rise of the darkest wizard the past few centuries had ever seen. That hadn't been surprising, many had already prophesised that, yet, his predictions differed entirely from the rest. In fact, this man had said that the dark wizard would lose his powers to a child, and that, after years of waiting, he would come back to claim revenge.

So Trelawney's reaction told Hermione that she was definitely on the right track.

Now all she needed to do was find those heretic writings of his to know how to keep the wizards revenge from destroying Harry, but how would she do that?

o*o

Harry was amazed.

It was a widely known fact that there was nothing that Harry enjoyed more than flying on his broomstick. Well, tonight he'd been proved wrong. Flying as a bird was by far bloody better than a broomstick. It wasn't like riding his Firebolt, which was such a good broom it practically flew well enough to let someone like Neville on and lead him to the Quidditch finals without him having to do anything. No, flying as a bird was nothing but pure personal talent. It was his body, the width and length of his wings, along with their position, the angle at which he bent his head, the way he held his talons. It was absolutely electrifying, and it had no limits.

Plus, it gave him a whole new view of Hogwarts and the grounds around them. A broom couldn't usually be taken too far up, in this form he could go high enough to kiss the sky, and it gave him a whole new fix on things.

Flying over Hogsmeade he saw hundreds of new allyways and shortcuts that he'd never seen or dreamt before, things that probably not even the Marauders knew about. And the castle! There were some towers and outer staircases that weren't even mentioned in the Marauders' Map, and there was nothing that he wanted more than to fetch Ron and Hermione to go and explore them to find out what they held.

Yet, the most surprising of all was the forest and the lake. The latter had an unnatural glow during the night, and he could see all the way down to where the mermaids were, there where he'd first seen them during the second task of the Triwizard tournament. While the forest was eerie as always from above, but he realized that with his strongly enhanced vision, he could see through the thick foliage to almost any dark depth. For example, there where Aragog and his family stood, he could distinctly tell apart each of their hairy legs from the branches of the trees they stood on, saw each one of their insect eyes reflecting oh, so slightly, the glow from that eyelash of moon above him. He could see creatures he'd never dreamed of, small and deadly, huge and frightened, predator and prey.

It was horrible and petrifying, yet beautiful and hypnotizing all at once.

He would have stared at it till dawn, if a slight movement from the edge of the forest hadn't caught his sharp glowing, phosphorescent green, hawkish eyes. It was the door to Hagrid's hut, opening to let the half giant out, along with Fang, his trusty weapon, and a lantern. When Hagrid looked up to the skies, Harry was afraid that he might see him, but it wasn't so, and Hermione's words played back in his mind. A Wingadeus can't be seen in flight, not even in full daylight. If he didn't have a sharp, black beak—which seemed to be made out of some metal—he would have sighed in relief. Not that he didn't want to speak to Hagrid, he just didn't know how the scruffy half giant would have reacted to seeing a gigantic magical hawk supposed to

be extinct. Harry didn't really wish to be kept where the hippogriffs once were.

Wondering what it was exactly that Hagrid did in the Forbidden Forest, Harry decided to tail him. He watched as the big man walked right past a thick, seemingly impenetrable, wall of tall bush shrubs as though they weren't even there. Harry realized they probably weren't, especially once he noticed that only a few paces behind those shrubs, seemed to begin a wide, easy trail, pretty much clear of particularly dangerous creatures. Even an average third year might have been able to cross it without much injury. Upon closer inspections, Harry also realized that it had just been opened, probably not earlier than the previous week, and it must have been covered the whole way with protective charms and spells.

What—or better—who had Dumbledore given this dangerous, hidden shelter to?

Leaving Hagrid, and the dim light of his lantern behind, Harry flew ahead, following the clearing. It wasn't hard. Not only could he clearly see the path through the foliage, but the air above it smelled better, cleaner, purer. And it led to the exact centre of the forest, he realized standing above it, where the trees were cluttered so thickly he almost couldn't see through them. Oh, wait, he could! It seemed as though the longer he stared at it, the more he could see through the thick leaves as though they were nothing but a hologram. Of course! A masking spell!

Maybe the Wingadeus had more powers than were known to wizards, he was pretty sure that in this form he could see through magic pretty clearly, and he was already beginning to master it within only a couple of hours in this form.

In any case, the trees above the clearing where the trail ended were practically entirely see through at the moment, and what he could see past them shocked him. A group of giants, maybe sixty of them or so, were cluttered there, safe in the arms of all the magic in Dumbledore's hands.

Of course, as a shadow member of the Order, he knew that the ancient wizard had managed to get the giants on his side, but that he'd invited them to stay inside the forest was something completely new to him. What were they talking about down there? He wanted to lower himself down to a branch to listen, but would they see him? They couldn't in flight, but could they while he just sat there for them to gawk at him? He decided to take the risk, although he realized that if all giants had that avid fascination with "interesting creatures" that Hagrid had, being seen by them could be very dangerous.

However, it seemed they couldn't, so he hid as best he could—just in case—and strained his hawkish hearing to try and understand what they were saying. At first, most of it sounded like gurgling. It must have been a different language, but if he strained to understand, he found that he did. The giants' mouths kept on forming gargles, but he clearly heard them speaking English.

None of them, however, were saying anything worth listening to. Some were contemplating on what a nice spot Dumbledore had given them, some were saying they hoped to stay long, some others were saying they were hungry. And it was then that Hagrid appeared in the clearing, and all the giants seemed to be mighty happy.

Because he was bringing them food.

At first, Harry found it strange that the giants attempted to speak English with someone who shared their blood by half, but he remembered right away that Hagrid had been raised by his father, a human, and had almost never known the giant half of his parentage. Was his mother among them? Harry couldn't tell. The women—if there were any among them—did not look like Madame Maxime. In any case, Hagrid didn't seem to regard any of them differently from another.

Hagrid sat there with them for a good two hours, Harry watching him, talking to them about things that weren't really all that important. What school was like inside, the students, the rest of the faculty, a lot of the time, Hagrid actually told them tales of Harry, which the giants seemed to enjoy, but for the most part, his friend kept reminding them

that Dumbledore was a great wizard and that Hogwarts and probably the rest of the wizarding world would be lost without him.

It was only when the first rays of the rising sun began to shine on the branch Harry was occupying, did he realize how late it was. As silently as he could, he whooshed his wings above the giants and took off toward the entrance of the castle, where, to his surprise, he found that Dumbledore was waiting for him. Harry understood right away that Dumbledore had sent him out that night exactly so that he could see what was going on in the forest.

"How long have they been here?" Harry asked, knowing that Dumbledore was waiting for that question.

"The giants arrived yesterday," the wizard replied quietly, and continued anticipating Harry's question. "I called the because of what you told me," oh, so that was it. It had to be because of that. Otherwise, why would he have pulled sixty valuable looking giants from the Army that he'd secretly been preparing for the past two years?

"How long will they stay?"

Dumbledore was expecting that as well. "Till the end of our school year. If there is no attack, they will return to their original positions."

Harry nodded in understanding, and made to go inside to recuperate on the sleep he'd lost, feeling a little safer than he had the night before. He stopped when Dumbledore called him. "I will speak to Mr Weasley in the morn, would you mind informing him on my behalf?" Harry accepted, and began the long journey from the Front Hall to his bed.

o*o

Ron sleeked across the streets of Hogsmeade in his Animagus form, unclear or whether he should be scared out of his wits, or exited enough to burst out of his skin...or fur...whatever. He still couldn't believe what Dumbledore had told him just the past morning.

Cornelius Fudge and Lucius Malfoy had owed to say that they would be coming to Hogwarts in the afternoon "to inspect the safety measures of the school." Fudge and Malfoy both coming to survey Hogwarts security? Both Harry and Hermione—after he'd told them—had hypothesized that Fudge had been called by the Dark Side, and they were both terrified of the idea.

The three of them had already completely lost respect for the Minister of Magic in fourth year, when he'd announced that he would fake being blind, shun Harry's truth, and keep saying that Voldemort was dead and that he could not have possibly risen to power again. If now he had been attracted by the Death Eaters...well, it would complicate matters greatly.

Especially because Dumbledore seemed to believe he had. Why send Ron to spy on them if not?

In any case, sneaking around Hogsmeade, when it wasn't a weekend where students were allowed to visit, was not an easy task. The village seemed nearly deserted, and even with the red light given from the setting sun, didn't do much to hide his shiny red fur, forcing him to hide in dark corners. And that was exactly what he'd been doing at the moment. He was sitting in an alleyway across from the Three Broomsticks—where Malfoy and the Minister had ducked only minutes prior—waiting for something that would let him slip into the tavern unnoticed. Problem was: what?

And then he saw it...or rather him. A traveller—probably an Auror in disguise (many of them roamed the streets of Hogsmeade, hoping to catch some Death Eaters out for either Harry or Dumbledore)—making his way to the tavern, grasping the handle of the front door. Without a second to think, Ron ran across the empty streets, trying to keep anyone from seeing him, and slipping between the folds of the man's robes.

There! He was in. Not losing any time, he ducked under the darkness of a table's legs. Only two tables over were Fudge and Malfoy. Waiting for the right moment when nobody would be looking his way, he ran from his hiding spot to his destination just as Hagrid slammed the door opened and called for a strong ale. Dumbledore had

probably sent him to distract people's attention, so that a red weasel would go unnoticed.

For a while, the two sitting at the table were quiet, possibly suspecting the half giant of being a spy, but when they saw the burly man sit at the bar with a large cup of ale, they turned back to their conversation, unawares of the real spy that was lying not too comfortably between their feet.

"We have nothing to worry about," he heard Lucius Malfoy's snobbish monotone, "we are nearly ready for the attack."

Fudge's voice was nervous in reply. "That Severus Snape better choose his sides quickly, or he'll be blown up, just as Karkaroff was." Karkaroff! The ex-Death Eater from Durmstrang during the Triwizard Tournament.

Malfoy's monotone was as confident as ever. "The breaching will be successful even without him."

To be continued.

Author's ramblings: I'm happier with this than I was with the last, but there was really not much interaction between characters, just setting up the action. Don't worry though, tormented feelings, discussions with Snape and Lily's diary will be with you in the next chapter, so keep following. If you have any kind of opinion on this, let me know at or simply leave a review.

Thank you

Pearl

Every parent leaves something behind for their children to remember them by. Lily Evans didn't know, when she left her diary behind, that it would help her son into knowing her and himself...or did she?

Disclaimer: Do I really still have to do this?

Curious: not that it matter at all in this story, but Justin Finch Fletchey is Head Boy. It really doesn't matter though, he won't show up at all. Scarab65: May Fudge die the most awful of the deaths! Hermia LaFaye: Thank you for your praise, but there's one thing that I have to specify. I don't put myself down in my author's notes because I don't think I'm a good writer, quite the contrary. I put myself down because I know I'm a good writer and that I can do better than what I am. Clare: I think the doll you're referring to is Chucky, but Cicciobello has absolutely nothing to do with him. And since I'm tired of people picturing Cicciobello differently from what he is, I'm giving you a link to the Cicciobello site: [/cicciobello/](#) Check it out. He's adorable (and he looks so innocent that it was really easy for me to write him as nasty, ahem, yes, I'm weird, but let's move on). Fantagal: For one thing, I think Ron would be used to seeing Harry having a nightmare, and there's also the fact that waking up someone while they're in the middle of one is almost as bad as waking up a sleepwalker. I just thought that in such a situation Ron wouldn't do anything. Quis: I find it very plausible for Fudge to be with the Death Eaters because he's a suck up, but that's just my opinion. Devinpotter-georgeweasley: Yes, it is depressing, and Cicciobello is an existing doll that I detest and decided to turn demonic. And I can't thank enough all the people who've compared my writing style to JKR's, I think that's just about the best compliment I could ever receive.

For a change I think that this chapter is really awful, and I'm not kidding. There's just something not at all convincing about it, and I would really appreciate it if you all gave me suggestions on how to make it better. Oh, and I started posting on , so if any of you would like to review there as well, I would appreciate it ^__^. And since I'm posting the final draft of each chapter on , I'll put that same version on this site. For now, I only have chapter 1, and it's not very different at all, just a few spelling mistakes corrected. Please tell me what you think is wrong with this chapter, and go check out the Cicciobello link I gave above.

And now, on with the fic:

Harry Potter and the Knowledge of a Mother

Chapter 14: Barriers

At breakfast, Hermione sat staring at the skies, seemingly waiting for something, and it was not lost on her two best friends. For the past several weeks, whenever it was time for the Owl Post, she'd be staring at the enchanted ceiling of the Great Hall, expecting "an important package". From who or with what? They had no clue.

And both of them knew that it was the only thing keeping her from having a breakdown at the thought that they had absolutely no idea of when the breach would be, so they kept hoping that the package would take as long as possible to arrive. At least if the package didn't come, for a while she would be preoccupied with that.

Fate was against them, however, as for the very second in which they formulated that thought in their minds, a storm of twelve owls swooped down from above in groups of three, each carrying large carton boxes that they dropped in front of Hermione. Bloody wonderful.

Hermione began bouncing up and down on her seat, her breakfast forgotten, looking very much like a small child on Christmas morning after the first sighting of an absurd amount of presents. "Yes, they're here! They're here!" She squealed, while she tore the boxes open.

The entire Gryffindor population was suddenly attentive. "What it is, Hermione?" Lavender Brown asked her.

Hermione gave her a secretive grin. "Can't say here," she mumbled while managing to hide the entire top half of her body inside the open box. From the inside of the carton cube they could hear her mumbling, "Seventh years' business. For the capsule. They have to find out on their own," and things of the like.

Many a heads perked up at this. The capsule? They hadn't done anything much but take a ridiculous amount of moving pictures, since the only one seemingly interested in making an effort was Ron, and most of his ideas were a little over the top, even for the Wizarding World. They had planned to put some very interesting things, but, since nobody besides Hermione had much of perseverance in doing anything that required work for a slightly extended period of time, most of them had lost interest after the first few weeks.

However, Hermione had managed to pique their interest, so they shooed all the younger students far away enough that they could find out what it was exactly that Hermione had received, and how it would affect their time capsule, without letting the younger ones know what it was.

"It's safe, Hermione, tell us what it is," Ron told her, excited. Always one up for something fun, and in desperate need to get himself away from the worries of the supposedly upcoming breach, this seemed like just what the mediwizard ordered.

Hermione pulled herself out of the box, her arms full of the strangest looking star-shaped things any of them had ever seen. They were as big in length and height as her fist was, yet they were only two centimetres or so in depth at the centre, their thickest point, and they tapered into a point at the tip of each of the four points. They were also made of some incredibly magical material for the stars seemed metallic—since they had the dull shine of metal—though they were transparent and light as plastic when held. Inside it there was a liquid that looked like nail-polish, since there were several different pastel shades reflected in the artificial stars. In the very centre there was a carved hole, obviously made for the tip of a wand.

"Okay," Hermione breathed as she sat down, taking one of the stars in hand while dropping the rest on the table. The sound of glass could be heard, but none broke. "This," she began, holding up the star that she held, "is a Holostar."

A collective "Ooh!" greeted her.

Harry didn't have a clue as to what it was or how it worked. "Hermione," he called her nervously, "what, exactly, is a Holostar?" He felt like a fool for asking.

"Yeah, what is a Holostar?" Ron asked with knit eyebrows. The rest of the seventh years joined in asking. Harry relaxed, not feeling quite as much like a fool as he had before.

"It's something that I helped Fred and George with," she replied smugly.

"You mean they gave this to you for free?!" Ron screeched in surprise.

"Yes," her grin was very confident, "they're letting us test them for free since I gave them the idea, the design, I told them what materials to use, and I actually invented the charms needed to make it work."

Her peers gazed at her in awe.

"What do they do?" Neville asked mystified.

"They store memories," she replied quickly, "and then allow everyone to see them."

The awe was indescribable.

"Like a Pensieve?" Harry asked, interested.

"Somewhat," she replied with a thoughtful pout, "but they only store one memory each, and you don't have to put your wand against your head to put it inside," she explained.

"So...how do you store a memory?" Ron asked, trembling with the excitement of trying them out.

"See this little round carving in the centre?" She asked, pointing to it. They all nodded. "You place the tip of your wand firmly against it while holding it in the palm of your hand, close your eyes, and try to remember as clearly as possible what it is that you want capture in

the Holostar. When you open your eyes and you see that the color of the nail-polish has changed, you can view your memory by tapping the Holostar three times with your wand," she explained.

"Sounds easy," Parvati Patil commented.

"It is," Hermione replied readily, obviously proud of her work. Her modesty couldn't be pushed down, however. "I would never have been able to do it if not for the Marauder's nail-polishes."

Ron knit his eyebrows. "What? The ones that were inside the capsule?"

She nodded with a wide grin, but sighed in annoyance when his expression revealed that he had no idea what she meant. "Honestly! Did you ever bother to read the instructions that came with it?" Ron shook his head in denial. She sighed again. "If you put on that nail-polish, whenever you're thinking of a memory, or even a fantasy, it will play on the nail-polished surface—let's say your fingernail—as though it were being projected on a screen," she lectured.

"Thanks for telling me that now, Hermione!" Parvati told her sarcastically, "If you'd have said it earlier you would have saved me heaps of embarrassment."

Hermione glared at her. "You could have read the instructions."

Harry watched her as she bickered with Parvati, and then went on to explain how she'd brewed some extra ingredients to add to the nailpolish so that it would work as she wished it to, and then onto other ways it could have been used. He was amazed that she was able to do something that required so much planning without letting anybody on.

And where did she find the time? True, they hadn't been reading the diary since they'd read of the Grad Ball, but that didn't really give her all that time. She was still Head Girl and spent most of her time tutoring and controlling the school, or helping teachers with their lesson plans or extra projects, or she was in the library studying for the NEWTs. Hermione's classes were all particularly advanced, so

hers would be far more difficult than anyone else's. Dumbledore had recently told her that she was to be Valedictorian, and she had to start planning for the Grad Ball and the Graduation ceremony. On top of that, she'd been patrolling at least two nights a week since her first assignment as 'Tailwinds', one third of the Neo Marauders.

Where did she find the time to sleep? And why was it that she always looked radiantly energetic? How could she do it all?

But then again, that was just the way Hermione was. She loved to work and study. And when something troubled her she buried herself into whatever she might have been working on at the moment, and she was only happier because of it. It was her way to unwind, and he admired her tremendously for it.

"Harry," Hermione's soft whisper snapped him out of his thoughts.

"Yes?" He asked, his mind still wondering how she could possibly be the person that she was.

"Uhm...we still have a couple of hours before the Duel Training, and we only have a few entries left to read of your mother's diary," she began tentatively. "Would you like to go and read them?"

Harry grinned at her. "Let's go," he said standing, holding his hand out to her. She took it, and they made to leave.

The Common Room was empty as expected, and it would be so for a while still, since it was a nice morning with no classes. They both sat down in front of the hearth where a nice fire was blazing to keep them warm from the chilly spring mornings, and Hermione pulled the diary out of her bag, opening it to the last read entry. Though they had neglected its reading for the past couple of weeks, she kept it with her always.

I can't believe that I just finished taking my NEWTs! I know I'll have a rather remarkable score for it, but that's not what's on my mind.

In a week, I'll have to leave this place that has been my shelter and home for the past seven years. What am I supposed to think about

that? Honestly, I feel rather empty. And afraid. Because from now on we won't have Dumbledore or McGonagall watching over us, pulling us out of the trouble that follows James wherever he goes.

Mostly, I'm afraid of what James said today, because I know that it will come true, no matter how much or how I try to avoid it.

After celebrating the end of the exams with the most unimaginable pranks ever (I still can't believe they masked Cicciobello with the image of a beautiful woman and sent him out to seduce Severus in front of everyone!), James and I retired to our room (my room that he's taken over with his smelly, messy habits!) where we made love. I didn't think it could possibly get any sweeter between us than it already was, but tonight he proved me wrong. He held me so tenderly that I cried through the entire act with the most love struck smile stuck on my face. I think I must have looked rather horrible, and James didn't look away once, the way he usually does, but at least tonight he didn't insist on keeping his glasses on.

I'm far too vulnerable with him.

Anyhow, instead of making some hilariously inappropriate joke, like he usually does, he put his glasses back on and stayed as serious as he was the first time he told me he loved me. He wanted to tell me something important.

Well, since when he does that I tend to become a pile of mushy tears and we always make love afterwards, I decided that I'd be the one to go first. I pulled out the wrapped package from my nightstand drawer, and handed it to him. He raised his eyebrows in question. "It's a graduation present," I told him. I didn't tell him that I'd been working on it since the year had started. "Go on, open it!" He always does this when I give him a present. He stares at it so that he can torture me without saying a word, making me all edgy and nervous, and he only opens it when I beg him to.

I watched him as he tore open the paper to reveal the large, heavy, thick, leather bound photo album. He started staring at it again, so I opened to the front page for him, where there was a picture of him

and his whole family. Sirius had told me that it was the most recent one. Taken right before Voldemort had taken them.

His voice choked when he said my name. "Lily...how?" His eyes were shimmering, and I told him that I'd been owling anyone that I thought might have a picture of his family since the beginning of the year and that there were a lot of pictures of the Marauders, and a lot of pictures of the two of us together, and—since I felt brave at the moment—I added, "And the more we stay together the more pictures of us we'll add to it."

He smiled. A really sad smile, and reached into his robes to pull out a small jewellery box. "Even the pictures of our wedding?" He was nervous in asking this, and his fingers shook when he opened the lid. I heard myself gasp when I saw what was inside. A thin, beautiful red gold ring with in the centre a diamond magically cut in the shape of a lily.

I didn't know what to say.

"Lily, this isn't a real proposal, and this ring isn't a wedding ring," he started, still as shaky as before, but I already knew that it wasn't. "This is just the promise that one day, hopefully not too far away, I can put a real wedding band on your finger and make you Lily Evans Potter," he explained, but I knew that too. "What do you say?"

He was sure that I would reject him, the fear was radiating off of him as though it were physical. I kissed him. And I told him yes. But I wish he hadn't said what he did next. "I'd give my life for you, Lily-Love," he told me, using that nickname that he only used when we were along.

I choked a sob when I answered him. "I know, James. I know."

"Mommy was really sad after Daddy gave her that ring," a childish voice called sadly from somewhere above their heads. Cicciobello was leaning against one of the wooden construction beams, hugging it as though to draw comfort from it.

Cicciobello, what...?" Harry began to ask, and the doll dejectedly began to fly down so that he rested in much the same position as before on the back of the plush sofa they were occupying. Neither Harry nor Hermione had ever seen Cicciobello so serious before.

"She never let Daddy know because she didn't want him to worry, but I heard her telling Aunt Jenna that she didn't want him to die for her, even if she would do the same thing herself," he explained.

"Ciccio," Hermione whispered.

"You're a lot like her, sissy, and she would have liked you," he told Hermione, and for the first time they watched a lone tear slide down his cheek. "Double-dee told me what happened to them," he said, referring to Dumbledore. "At least they got to put their wedding pictures in that album," he sniffed.

Harry tensed at this. "You mean that the photo album that I have is the same one that my mom gave to my dad after their exams?" The doll nodded. What was Harry supposed to say to that?

Hermione decided that it was best to keep reading, but there was only one more entry left.

This past week I wasn't able to hold a quill straight for the life of me. I don't know why, but it seemed as though I couldn't will my hand to write. Today though, I don't have a choice, because tomorrow we board the Hogwarts Express for the last time, and tonight, at sunset this diary will be buried with the time capsule.

Everything is already in it but this and Cicciobello.

I finally convinced James to let me put the doll in there. I don't really want to. As much trouble as he can be, I've come to think of him as family, but he's more needed inside there, for the next person to find it.

Cicciobello already knows it. I spoke to him already. I told him that I would put a charm on him so that he would wake up exactly when the

trunk would be reopened, so he wouldn't be bored. He's got an important job to do, and I know he'll do it well.

As for me, well, I'd gladly put myself in there as well so as to not leave this place. It's almost like a dream, wonderful and horrible at the same time, but so real that it's become reality. What if I leave, and realise that the dream is over?

I guess it doesn't really matter either way. After all, the dream will only last a few years more.

I know I shouldn't be talking like this, but I'm leaving my home behind for an uncertain and dangerous future. It scares me. But it doesn't matter. Even if my life was a breath long it wouldn't matter, so long as that breath was with James. And my last breath will be with him.

So I guess this means goodbye, farewell, and adieu.

Forever

Lily

What were they supposed to say to something like that?

Cicciobello sniffled behind them. "You better go to Training."

And they did.

o*o

"Did everyone practice their Discorso Nubis as told?" Dumbledore asked the large group of students that varied from fourth years to sevenths. Most of them nodded, but the Slytherins always had something to say about the unusual spells and hexes that the Headmaster had been teaching for the past three years.

"Yeah, we practised," said Millicent Bullstrode, "it's not really easy to practice summoning lightning when there isn't a cloud in the sky."

"Yeah," stepped in Pansy Parkinson, "I barely got more than a spark."

Dumbledore gave them a look from behind his half moon spectacles. He didn't bother saying anything, since he'd already explained the previous lesson why they would only be practising in good weather. If they managed to get a nice big spark when there weren't the elements at hand, than when they did have it, their lightning would be enough to stun a Death Eater into unconsciousness until the Aurors arrived. Marvellously helpful during a downpour.

Snape, however, being Head of House, retold the entire reason to his snobbish House members. A pretty worthless effort, in any case. Dumbledore cleared his throat, letting the potions master know that they were to move on.

"Today I will teach you how to erect a barrier of light around yourselves. Can anyone tell me how this can be helpful?" Asked the Headmaster. Hermione's hand immediately shot up, and the Slytherins rolled their eyes, while Dumbledore's eyes twinkled at her. "Yes, Miss Granger?"

Hermione cleared her throat. "It's particularly helpful when one is forced to fight in an area where there might be a lot of casualties, Aurors often use it when they are confronting someone in crowded streets, and it can cover whichever area the user wishes to. The size, however, depends solely on the magical strength of the user," she answered.

"Very good, Miss Granger," Dumbledore complimented. "The first spell of this category that we will—"

Pansy Parkinson interrupted him. "That's stupid! If you can put up a barrier, why would you want to fight inside of it? Just use it as a shield so you won't get hurt!" Hermione glared holes into Pansy's body.

"Miss Granger, would you explain why this theory is wrong?" Dumbledore asked her.

She nodded. "A barrier can only work if there are two separate bodies within its walls," she explained. "It takes its powers from the opposite energies of the two parties. If two people wish to use it as a shield,

they wouldn't be able to erect it, because their intentions would be harmonious and not opposing."

"Very good, Miss Granger, thirty points for Gryffindor," the Headmaster twinkled. "Now, as I was saying, the first spell of this category that we will be learning is 'Vallum Sablatum'," as the students had been taught from the first day, they began to rhythmically repeat the words to remember them well. "To be able to erect them, we will pair you up in antagonistic groups, so that your wills will oppose," he explained, and began to call the pairs. Snape must have thought them up, because all the students found themselves facing someone they despised. Harry was facing Goyle, stupid, yes, but odious nonetheless. Hermione was paired with Parkinson, Ginny with Bullstrode, and Ron with Malfoy (Ron started threatening the blond away from his sister instantly). Yep, Snape must have decided the pairings. As the Gryffindors listened intently to Dumbledore's explanations of how to hold the wands in position they only hoped that nothing too horrible would come out of the pairings. Dumbledore asked Harry to start.

Harry repeated the instructions in his head before executing them. Point wand down to ground steadily, toward the spot right between yourself and your opponent, hold it confidently, think clearly of barring yourself and your opponent in a closed quarter, and enunciate, "Vallum Sablatum!" Immediately a shimmering wall of light erected itself around them, going as high as to touch the insanely tall ceiling of the Duelling Chamber. More than light, it looked like it was made of liquid, almost like the surface of a bubble, iridescent colors reflecting off of it. And it was wide enough to fit sixty Goyles into it. They were effectively blocked in.

"Very good, Harry," Dumbledore complimented, yet next to him, Snape wore the ugliest expression of disgusted loathing Harry had ever seen directed at him. "Now, to remove the barrier, hold your wand straight up above your head, and while saying 'Desilire', guide the barrier into the ground with your wand," Harry did as told, and instantly he and the Slytherin were freed. Snape looked even uglier.

Right after Harry came Hermione, who did it just as quickly and perfectly as Harry, though hers had a white and topaz glow. Like the

eyes of the Volpegea, Harry noticed. It was fascinating to look at. When she pulled it down, Snape couldn't hold his snide comments back.

"The two of you just can't help but to show off," though the comment was quiet, everyone heard him. And everyone saw the twinkle in Dumbledore's eye dim once more. "Go back to practising the rest of you," he ordered, and without another word they all did so.

Harry and Hermione stood their ground, however, motionless, watching Snape and pitying him.

Snape looked at them crossly. "Your partners wish to practice as well," actually, Pansy and Goyle were rather happy their partners weren't returning to them, but Snape honestly didn't care at the moment.

Harry watched him with knit eyebrows before asking. "Why do you hate me so much?"

Snape's expression was one contempt and surprise. "I thought your disregard for school rules, your thirst for fame and attention, and your continuously obnoxious behaviour made that answer rather obvious," he taunted.

Harry wasn't insulted. "So why did you save my life so many times?"

A cynical black eyebrow touched greasy black hairline. "When would I have done that?"

"In first, for starters," Harry replied readily, "when Quarrel was jinxing the broom during the Quidditch game."

"I was in debt with your father," he answered stiffly.

"I don't think that's it." Again Snape's eyebrow touched his hair.

"So what do you think it is?" His sneer seemed amused.

"I think you want to hate me, because I have my father's looks, but you can't because even if I have my father's face, my eyes belong to my mom," Snape looked horrified.

"And why would that be?"

"Because I don't think you could hate anything that she created, even if it was with someone you despised," Harry voice was confident when he spoke this, belying the fear of Snape taking his anger out on him. But Snape didn't move. He sat stiff and hard as a statue, looking down on him with pure venom.

"Dismissed."

It almost looked like he hadn't said the word at all, his lips so thinly pursed together that they looked as though they couldn't possibly open wide enough for him to formulate a sentence, but Harry knew that he had spoken. "Fine," he relented, making to turn away, "but I'll let you know that your time is running out."

o*o

"Mr Black has informed me that many people have Apparated in the cavern that Snuffles had used as a hiding spot in Hogsmeade, I believe you are familiar with it," Dumbledore commented at Harry, Ron, and Hermione, sitting in the Headmaster's office for their weekly reports.

"So the Ministry didn't allow us to place the Apparition wards that we asked for, professor?" Hermione asked a little worried. Hogwarts itself was the safest place on the face of the planet, but its weak spot was exactly Hogsmeade, which turned into a turistic spot on weekends and vacations.

"No, they did not allow the Apparition wards. Instead they allowed Portkeys as well," Hermione gasped. Dumbledore chuckled. "Yes, Cornelius thought it would make the school safer because it would allow Aurors to materialize here in case of need. Or so he said on his last inspections," Dumbledore didn't blame him. Fudge wasn't evil, he

was just weak, and who was weak always sought out whom he thought to be stronger, much like Wormtail had.

"He wants to make it easier on them," Ron stated. There was no denying that.

"Yes, and now they're gathering forces where they won't be noticed by the villagers," not many people ventured near the cave, since it was on the outskirts.

"How long before they have enough people for a breach?" Harry asked.

Dumbledore looked at him. "Well, they have to apparate in small groups and far apart in time, or they'll call attention to themselves, Harry."

Harry wasn't distracted. "How much time?"

"Three, four days at most," was the certain reply. Harry nodded, feeling a cold trickle of sweat on his neck.

Looking at him, Hermione wordlessly laced her fingers with his, taking a firm grasp of his hand.

To be continued.

Author's ramblings: Well you know that I want to be contacted at if you have any thoughts on this whatsoever, or you can just leave reviews. And to see the real Cicciobello (not the possessed one from my story) go check out: [.it/cicciobello/](https://www.patreon.com/cicciobello)

Thanks

Pearl

Every parent leaves something behind for their children to remember them by. Lily Evans didn't know, when she left her diary behind that it would help her son into knowing her and himself...or did she?

Disclaimer: Does anybody even read these?

PadfootOldBuddyOldPal: Thanks for the tip, since I was in American schools between the ages of twelve and sixteen I'm only familiar with their graduations (and the Italians). If you could actually tell me what happens in British graduation ceremonies I would really appreciate it.
Usha88: EVERYBODY thinks that all dolls are scary...specially mine ^__^
Space Efficient Girl: You need go crazy no longer, for here is chapter 15...though you might go crazy when you get to the end cuz it's kind of a cliffie. Don't worry though, my next installment will be on Friday (Chapter 16 is already written out).

Oh, and just as a note of warning, this is my first attempt at writing a battle scene, and I don't think it's very much (even if when I pictured the whole ordeal in my mind I thought it would have been awesome). By the way, when you get to the end you might want to kill me or give me the title of Queen of Cliffhangers.

And now: on with fic:

Harry Potter and the Knowledge of a Mother

Chapter 15: Breach

The report of Death Eater forces taking over Snuffles' cavern had been reported an exact week ago, Harry mused, and there was absolutely no indication that they were attacking. Their delay could be a possible result of three things. One, they were gathering more forces than expected and were therefore taking a more extended amount of time regrouping, two, something had gone wrong and delayed their plans, or three, they were just waiting for Dumbledore to let his guard down.

Probably the intruders didn't know that the cave had been controlled by Dumbledore, and were therefore expecting a low defence from their part. That, of course, didn't mean that they would just waltz in

expecting it to be easy. There was practically every Death Eater close to Voldemort in that cave, and hiding in the woods near it there were Dementors. Yep, Harry had seen them when he was inspecting the skies the same night that they had found out. He'd nearly fainted while in the air as he hovered above them.

Harry watched the grounds around him, searching for anything out of place from his perch atop the tallest Hogwarts tower. Dumbledore had told him to stay within school grounds after that night with the Dementors, afraid that Voldemort might sense him. Harry knew he was hiding in that cavern, he could feel him there, plotting. His scar throbbed constantly, and was bright at every hour of the day behind his bangs. Even now, standing as Falcospeak, the feathers that usually covered his scar (which was present as always) had fallen off, and the cut seemed to glow into the night, contrasting with the absolute black of his feathers. He wondered why they, himself included, kept on calling it a scar. It had never actually scarred over, it always looked like a fresh cut, red, though not very deep at first glance. It didn't matter. It was far deeper than it looked.

Around him, the night was as quiet as ever, nobody would have guessed what the grounds were hiding. There, in the Forbidden Forest, near that path that Harry had noticed that first night, Hagrid stood, his weapon at hand, Fang at his side. They had thought it would be best if he didn't stand directly behind those imaginary bushes for they couldn't be sure that Dementors wouldn't see through the fake shrubs. Fifty yards into the path, the Giant Squad was waiting in position for Hagrid's signal. They were getting a little restless. They had been doing this same routine for the past week, and the Giants wanted to battle. They were trained for it, after all.

Below, on the steps that led to the front doors of the school a red weasel that went by the name of Sneak lay sleeping, curled around itself. At the signal, he was to run inside and wake the teachers (all resting in the Great Hall) and prepare them for battle. The only faculty members not to take part of the battle were Trelawney and Filch, for obvious reasons.

In the towers that he had discovered during the first inspection, the ones that weren't on the Marauders map, were occupied by members

of the Order of the Phoenix, who had all been called there a week prior. McGonagall, in her cat form, was to call them to battle at the signal as well. After that, they would all make their way swiftly to the edge of the forest opposite of where the Giants waited.

If the enemy left their hiding spot, Fawkes, who was guarding the cavern and the surrounding woods, would fly ahead and give the signal to reach positions. Sirius, instead, hid in the alleyway facing the Shrieking Shack, disguised as Padfoot. If Wormtail was with them, he would probably lead them into the school through the Whomping Willow passage, since any other way was blocked by thousands of wards.

"Harry," came a feminine hiss from beside him. "You were supposed to trade watch with me hours ago," Hermione reprimanded, transforming into Tailwinds before his eyes. Even in her fox form, her topaz and white eyes blazed at him. He and Hermione had been told to keep watch from their perch on the tower of their surroundings (much to the chagrin of her fear of heights), but he had failed to wake Hermione so that she could take his place.

He shrugged, or tried to in his current form. "I wanted to let you sleep."

"Harry," her tone was lecturing. "You need your rest, if they breach tonight and you're too tired to fight—" he didn't allow her to finish the sentence.

"I couldn't sleep if I tried," he told her gruffly. "Besides, with all the watches you've been keeping I thought I should let you catch up on your sleep," his voice, or mental voice as he was using his thoughts to speak, held a smile. "I need the smartest witch in school to be fresh and sober when they breach."

In his mind he heard her sigh. It really was strange to speak with her through thought. "Thank you," she answered resigned.

Watching her, Harry brought up a subject that had been bothering him for the past week. "Hermione," he began nervously, "the

Holostars. Is there...a reason for why you insisted that Fred and George send them in such a hurry?"

Her reply was surprised and nervous. "I just wanted to give everyone time to store a lot of memories before the year is out," her tone belied guilt.

A pause, and then Harry asked again. "It's not that you did it...as a...goodbye present...did you?" Honestly, the thought had been nagging at Harry since that interview in Dumbledore's office. At first he'd been in awe at all the things Hermione managed to do without braking down, but then a question had formed in his mind. What if she thought that she wouldn't live past the summer?

"I won't say I'm not scared, Harry," Hermione told him defiantly. "I won't say that, because I've never been this scared in my life. But I have no intention of giving up my life. I won't go without a fight."

"Then why are you storing all those memories?" He said, referring to the endless Holostars that she kept in her robes at all times.

"Harry, I don't want to die," she repeated, "but this is war, or its prelude, Harry. There are risks."

Harry was about to reply, but the sound of the Whomping Willow lashing out at nothing in the middle of the night caught his attention and held it. Especially when it suddenly stopped moving as though it had been immobilized. "Hermione, look!" He called to her. There in the shadows of the tree's limbs, was a small figure scurrying about. A mouse. "Hermione, it's him!" He shouted in her mind. "It's Wormtail!"

Hermione put one of her paws against his back. "You can't go after him, Harry, you'll give us away," she told him, calming him. "He's here to scout," she told him.

"Can you read his mind from here?" She nodded her head, her elf-like ears twitching as though picking up a sound from far away.

"He's terrified. If his master dies tonight he's lost, but there's nothing out of the ordinary and Dumbledore's too old to uphold a breach. He

thinks we have no idea they're coming," she reported Wormtail's thoughts. After nearly an hour of scouting the mouse headed back to the Whomping Willow sure that they would be successful.

"Tell, everybody to start getting ready for the signal," Harry ordered, but Hermione was already working on that.

She was contacting Sneak, below them, that very second. "Ron," she whispered in her mind, "Ron, are you awake?" She asked. He was.

"Yeah, the Whomping Willow woke me up," he told her grumpily.

"Did you see Wormtail down there?"

"Yeah, I bloody well sure did," he replied bitterly. "I wanted to go after him, but I figured You-Know-Who would get suspicious if his little pet didn't come home."

Hermione let out a sigh of relief. "Good, now go tell the faculty to start getting ready," she ordered, and Ron went right away. Only a moment later Dumbledore stood sipping a sherbet lemon in the spot just a short time prior occupied by the weasel.

Within seconds McGonagall had warned the members, of the Order and Hagrid had told the Giants to get ready, which they readily did. Now they were just waiting for Padfoot's return and Fawkes' signal.

And then Harry felt it. A growing pain above his right eye, where his scar stood, intensifying by second, blinding him. He felt the world spinning around him. "They're coming," he whispered hoarsely, as his body was no longer able to maintain his hawkish form and returned him to the shapes of a human Harry Potter. "He's close," he told Hermione, this time speaking through his mouth, as he clutched his hand to a spot on his forehead. "He's coming."

Hermione placed a paw on his back, trying to keep him from hurtling down the side of the tower, and began screaming with her telepathy for everyone to get in position.

"But Fawkes didn't give the signal yet!" She could hear Ron protest in his mind.

"Something must have slowed her down," she replied quickly, "Harry's having convulsions. Professor Dumbledore, I'm bringing him down to ground level," she told the Headmaster. In the distance a bird screeched the ugliest, most urgent sound. She looked over to see Fawkes, carrying a beaten black dog in her talons. Someone must have attacked Sirius, probably thinking that he was the only one that was guarding at the moment.

"Yes, Miss Granger, but first," she heard his ancient voice speaking in her mind, her ears receiving the sound after her brain did, "make that storm come here quicker," he ordered.

Storm? What storm? Hermione asked herself frantically. She'd been so preoccupied with Harry and Wormtail that she didn't even notice the storm forming somewhere beyond Hogsmeade. Of course! She thought. That's why they're attacking tonight! They must have thought that with such an ugly storm brewing, not even Hagrid would wander out of his hut. Hermione closed her eyes, her paws still pinning Harry safely to the roof of the tower as he convulsed beneath her, and concentrated. It wasn't easy, she'd never done something so drastic with the elements. All she'd really done till that moment had been a couple of whirlwinds, and she'd made a few plants grow quicker. Okay, the first thing to do was make the water in those clouds condense with higher speed, and then push it toward the school with the most powerful winds that she could conjure.

Taking a deep breath, she opened her eyes. As she willed the black clouds to grow her pupils dilated and her entire irises turned white pushing back the topaz that had surrounded it only seconds earlier. The clouds grew in size and darkened in color before her very eyes, and she began to pull them toward her with all her might. Within seconds, the clouds were directly over her head. The clouds wouldn't release water until after the Death Eaters would arrive, but she knew that even that was an advantage.

Turning herself back into her original form she held Harry with one hand, and reached for the Firebolt behind her with the other. He had

suggested that they use that when going to and leaving the tower, knowing how much Hermione hated to fly, and how uncomfortable it was to hang on when a big pair of wings flapped beneath your arse. Hermione had never been so glad to mount a broom in her entire life. Pushing her fear aside for Harry's sake, she guided them both to the secure ground next to where Dumbledore stood. Her breath was heavy and she was dizzy from both handling a broom with the added weight of an extra person and the effort of making a storm reach its destination far sooner than it should have.

"Marvellous job, Miss Granger," the Headmaster complimented her, just as Ron, restored to his original form, stepped out of the building.

"They're all right here behind the door," he informed, referring to the school's faculty members, and then turned to look at Harry.

His convulsions had stopped, but his breath was heavy and ragged, and somehow, he'd split a lip. And just then, Harry stood up straight and looked at the Whomping Willow with determination.

"The pain stopped suddenly," he told them. Hermione jumped at hearing him say that. "He's here," and the remaining three people turned to look at the same tree that Harry had been fixing with his glare, Fawkes coming to stand at their feet, her eyes still on the Willow as well.

The sky, that had been dark already because of lacking moonlight, was now a black blanket, not allowing any light onto the courtyard, the only source of illumination the lanterns that were dimly lit in the Hogwarts hallways streaming veiled light out of the window. Strong gusts of wind snapped their robes around their feet, freezing the cold sweat that they weren't able to hold back, making their eyes water from its intensity.

But even in these conditions the four—five, with the phoenix—saw a fat, balding, brown mouse scurrying out of the passage to hit the knot on the tree. One of its front legs shone an eerie white, as though the leg were made of metal. And it was. It was made of silver.

Wormtail again.

He didn't turn back to his natural form, and soon they found out why. What must have been more than a thirty Dementors followed him out of the passage, and Harry felt the world spinning around, as Hermione and Ron felt the life sucked out of them. Before he could pass out, Hermione pulled out enough chocolate frogs to keep them strong for a while. Everyone devoured them desperately. Though Harry couldn't see them, he knew the Giants and the Order members were doing much the same thing.

They were a rather horrible sight, masked with their black robes, so that nothing but maybe a hand, dead and putrefied, was exposed to them. They were hungry, and they seemed to be pointing Harry. They were less than what Harry had calculated when he'd flown over the woods, but they were enough to send a man to horrid depths within few short moments.

To confirm his thoughts, out of the passage came eighty or so figures, wearing cloaks featuring the Dark Mark. All that could be seen of them was their mouths, smudged with chocolate, their skin, so grey and ashy that they looked like corpses, and their jaw muscles, tense and clenched after the prolonged exposure to the Dementors.

Only when the last hooded figure stepped out did Wormtail turn back into Peter Pettigrew. This one was different. There were no chocolate stains around its mouth, his face was squished, like a serpent's, his nostrils only two flat slits, his skin looked scaly, and his eyes were a glowing blood red.

"Well, Tom," Dumbledore began, a Chocolate Frog leg in hand, "you really look horrible."

Voldemort, once known as Tom Riddle, sneered at him. "I look like power." He corrected. "I am power."

Dumbledore shrugged. "You may be, but you still look horrible."

His opponent smiled a most horrifying smile. "You know, professor," he spat the word, "I came here hoping to make a...a deal with you, if you will."

Dumbledore's eyebrows furrowed. "Oh?" He asked. "And since when is a deal made with the aid of thirty Dementors?"

"Since they are part of the deal," the Headmaster motioned him to go on. "I will tell these Dementors to retreat, and leave your school unharmed, at the sole condition that you follow me where you are required to."

The old wizard popped the Chocolate Frog leg he was holding in his mouth, chewed it and swallowed it slowly, made to look as he was thinking, and then, after a brief pause, "No."

"No?" Voldemort echoed, his voice hushed but angry. "You wish to have the life of seven hundred students on your conscience?" He asked, trying to lay the guilt trip on him. It didn't matter that he wouldn't have had the Dementors retreat in any case, but the Headmaster was supposed to care for them.

"You really think we'd let you and your dirty Dementors inside the school?" Harry spat at him.

Voldemort laughed. His cruel, cold, snake like hissing laugh. "How do you plan to stop me? With your Mudblood girlfriend?" He threw a cursory glance to Hermione. "Or with that ridiculous bird?" Looking at Fawkes he laughed harder.

But Harry smiled. A smile that unsettled something within Voldemort. "Why don't you show him what you can do Fawkes?" And with that the bird let out a high-pitched, eardrum bursting screech, giving off the final signal. Immediately, from behind the fake bushes the sixty-some Giants rushed out forming three perfect military roes, while from the opposite side of the forest, thirty or so Order of the Phoenix members came out, holding their wands in offensive stances, steadily pointed at the Dementors. Among them, Harry could see Sirius, slightly beaten but determined, Lupin, sickly looking but strong as ever, and Jenna, who looked like she wanted a piece of the man that had killed her best friend sixteen years earlier.

Voldemort chuckled again. "You are outnumbered."

While the faculty members filtered out of the school behind him, Harry pulled his wand from his robes and pointed it at the Dementors. Closing his eyes to gather the happiness of all those wonderful nights spent with Hermione before the fire, reading his mother's diary, Harry called, "EXPECTO PATRONUM!" His Patronus took out twelve of the Dementors before anyone even registered it. He threw a smirk Voldemort's way. "Now we're not," he said, accepting the Chocolate Frog that Hermione was handing him.

It was right then that the rain started to fall. A thick, unending sheet of hard water dropping incessantly and mercilessly on their heads heavily. Dumbledore and his followers welcomed it. His opponents took it as a beacon to begin battle.

Spells began to run amuck from both sides, the Dementors tried to get to anyone in their reach, enemy and non, Giants waved their weapons. Harry and Lupin were busy taking out Dementors while faculty members duelled with Death Eaters.

Just as the last Dementor dropped, out of the school doors, that had been freed in favour of the courtyard, students had walked out, who had been beckoned by either the sound of battle, or by the effect of the Dementors. Most of them were Slytherins, yet there were a couple of Ravenclaws among them.

They all raised their wands and pointed them against their own faculty. Looking at them more closely, Harry realized that they were mostly all related to important Death Eaters. Shit! He swore. He watched powerless as Snape was taken out by Millicent Bultstrode since he had his back turned to them, not even knowing his students had filed out of their dormitories. Now we're outnumbered!

Yet, just as he thought that, several of those perpetrators were thrown into a high arch in the air by some strong disarming spells.

Gryffindors! His roommates, his friends, almost the entire Gryffindor house from fourth year and above stood there, wands poised. Ginny winked at him after having disarmed Goyle.

Pansy was thrown on top of a Dementor by a strong "Expelliarmus!" Krista and her friends were there as well.

And then it all became confused. Students fighting teachers fighting Death Eaters fighting Giants. Even Ciucciobello fought, by throwing himself in the gut of any Death Eater that he came across. Harry was throwing hexes, yet he didn't know which ones, the sound of the rain too loud, the battle too confused, his robes too heavy because of the water.

"GINNY!" He thought he heard someone shout from the Front Doors. Draco Malfoy stood there horrified after having screamed the name, as his own father, Lucius Malfoy, stood not twenty paces from his son with one hand firmly squeezing the redhead's neck. Harry saw the man raise his wand, a maniacal expression covering his face, making him look mad. Oh, no! There wasn't time! Harry looked on in pure horror as he saw the word forming on the Death Eater's mouth.

"AVADA..." but before he could finish giving her the Unforgivable, Malfoy, Draco Malfoy, shouted out, "Expelliarmus!" The black, expensive wand was thrown far away, the girl dropped from his hold slumping to the ground, and the man himself was thrown back several feet. Before he could get back up again his son shouted, "Petrificus Totalus!" Lucius Malfoy lay unmoving in the mud.

Draco rushed over to Ginny, helping the gasping girl to her feet, supporting her light weight against his body as he began to petrify other Death Eaters. The next one he'd sent down was Cornelius Fudge, the Minister of Magic, who had just had his wand split in two by Rubeus Hagrid, the half Giant that taught Care of Magical Creatures. Hagrid looked at the young Malfoy stunned, and then broke into a proud grin beneath his burly beard. "G'ed work, lad!" he called to him. "G'ed work!"

"DISCERPO NUBIS!" Somewhere off to his right he heard Hermione shout, and watched as her wand guided lightning pillars down from the clouds and onto unsuspecting opponents. She's already taken out seven Slytherins when Harry noticed a bony, horrid hand reaching for her throat. Before she could even scream, Voldemort had his wand pressed against her chest menacingly.

And Harry watched with terrified stupor as his enemy, the man that had taken everything from him, turned to face him, holding Hermione in his arms. That laugh, the laugh that Harry hated, oh, so much, filled the entire courtyard, so much that everyone stopped to stare. He cackled madly as Harry watched him helplessly, the rain carrying out the hissing laugh to every ear rather than dampening the sound, like it had with everything else.

No, not her!

To be continued.

Author's ramblings: Please don't kill me, I'm just a little ole fanfic writer! Anyway, for any comments, criticisms, or flames, always review or drop me a line at .

Love

Pearl

PS: Next chapter out on Friday

Every parent leaves something behind for their children to remember them by. Lily Evans didn't know, when she left her diary behind, that it would help her son into knowing her and himself...or did she?

Disclaimer: Pfui...let's move on.

Curly girl and PoPo: Honestly, if Dumbledore wanted the students to stay out of the fight, he would have locked them in somehow, but do remember that he's been training them for it for the past three years or so. And I did think about organizing the fight differently (I'll let you know that I spent three weeks thinking about how to make the fight run along), but, in the end, that just seemed like the better thing to do (well, that's just my excuse, but I'm actually just not good at all on working out fighting scenes ^____^). PadfootOldBuddyOldPal: Thanks for the info, that's actually very close to what I wanted to do with it. Herms the germ!: That is actually a very interesting idea...might use it for a future fic ^__^. And to the rest of you this chapter should, I hope, surprise you. I won't keep you any longer.

On with the fic:

Harry Potter and the Knowledge of a Mother

Chapter 16: Discerso Nubis

His heart stopped. That very second the world could have collapsed around him but it would never be able to take his mind, heart, and eyes away from the scene before him.

That laugh, that mad laugh that was driving him crazy and making his blood boil in helpless anger kept on ringing in his ears while Hermione glared at the monster that was currently holding a wand to her heart, her face a mask of terrorized defiance.

And that horrid laughter never stopped. "Ah, Harry," Voldemort began, his tone completely spiteful, "your family always did have a liking for filthy Mudbloods," he spat, laughing. "Clever little Mudblood witches, always interfering with my plans," his hand tightened around Hermione's smooth white neck. "Just like that filthy Lily Potter, isn't she Harry?" The laugh continued. "She's just like your pretty

Mudblood mother," this time he actually spit on her cheek. "Disgusting!" And then he grinned, turning her to face Harry. "Have any last words to tell your boyfriend?" He asked her maliciously.

Hermione closed her eyes and gripped her wand tightly. She wouldn't cry before this monster. So let's see, what could she do in this situation. She had no chance of using her wand against him. She was in a bad position, she would have never been able to position her wand well for a good spell, it would have been useless. Besides, the cackling megalomaniac would kill her before she even got the word out. What else could she do? Cicciobello was looking at her expectantly from behind Harry's shoulder, ready to come and help her the second Voldemort was distracted, but how could he be distracted? She didn't have anything on her but the clothes on her back, a ridiculous amount of Chocolate Frogs in her left pocket, and in her right she had only...of course! Well, it wasn't safe, and it wasn't likely to work like she wanted it to, but it was her only chance.

"Harry," she began, her voice determined, yet her face a mask of true fear. "The lightning. Use the lightning, Harry."

Oh, Merlin, no! It was just like his dream. He didn't want her to die tonight. He wouldn't let her die tonight. But he couldn't do what she was asking. Voldemort was holding her too tightly, and there was too much of a chance that he might hit her instead. He knew that the spell was only made to stun, but it would only make things worse if it stunned her.

Voldemort threw his head back and laughed again. "He won't use that!" He laughed again, understanding as much as Harry what she meant. "He won't risk hitting his stupid Mudblood slut!" Again, he threw his head back and laughed.

Harry wasn't going to let her die. As images of the time spent with her filled his vision, so the knowledge that he would save her filled his mind. And at each image that filled his mind, the knowledge only became stronger. Hermione, would you read the diary out loud for me? I'd love to. She's not going to die. I should have never kissed you, but no mistake has ever felt so good or right. She's not going to die. That first kiss that they shared by the hearth while reading the

diary. She's not going to die. The kiss on the cheek she'd given him at King's Cross after fourth year. She's not going to die. The time she'd helped him save Sirius. She's not going to die. The strong sounding slap across the face that she gave Malfoy. She's not going to die. The note that she had in her hand when she'd been petrified by the Basilisk. She's not going to die. The way she'd barged into his cabin looking for Trevor the first year. She's not going to die.

And then the chant became reality. She wasn't going to die. As Voldemort kept on laughing, his head thrown back overconfidently, Cicciobello launched himself with all his strength against his gut, kicking and pounding that monster's stomach. "You killed them! You killed them! You killed Mommy and Daddy!" He kept on shouting with each hit he dealt, surprising Voldemort out of his laughter.

Harry watched as Hermione took advantage of the moment and pulled something out of her pocket, aiming it at her aggressor's heart (or where the heart should have been). He invoked his barrier, "VALLUM SOBLATUM!" effectively trapping himself, Hermione, the enraged Cicciobello, and Voldemort, all in the same confining cage made of shimmering liquid light. Hermione didn't miss her opportunity. Voldemort fought to get the enraged doll away from himself and held onto her neck with ever increasing pressure, but she wasn't going to let that stop her. Her weapon was already aimed, all she needed to do was gather all the strength in her body to embed it in his chest. And before allowing the world to blur around her, she did. She reeled her arm back with all her might and hit him squarely in the middle of the chest.

Voldemort cried out in pain, letting Hermione go as he touched the item that had forcefully become part of his anatomy. A strange transparent, metallic looking four tipped star had one of its points embedded at least two inches within his chest. He laughed again, though now it sounded very painful. "This won't kill ME!" He shouted at them.

But the only reply that he got were Hermione and Harry's voices shouting simultaneously, "DISCERSO NUBIS!"

Maybe the Holostar that Hermione had used against him wouldn't have killed him, and Cicciobello's weak blows hardly fazed him, but the two strong electrifying pillars of luminous electricity that hit the Holostar and channelled through his body thanks to it did...kill him.

Hermione was the first to notice. "Harry," she whispered, her voice raspy from the tight hold that Voldemort had on it just seconds prior. "Harry, he's not breathing," she croaked.

Cicciobello flew over to him. He nudged the corpse with his foot. No answer. He punched it. No answer. He began to thrash and showered the dead snake like he had before. "You deserved it, you deserved it, you murdered, you killed Mommy and Daddy!" Cicciobello was crying again. Not the lone tear that they had seen earlier, but an endless river of sorrow in mourning of the family that he'd lost so long ago without knowing.

"NO!" they heard someone shout from the somewhere outside of the barrier. Nothing could be seen across the thick wall of light, so Harry brought it down to see what was going on outside their confinement. Sirius, enraged and desperate, was trying to hold on to a fat agitated mouse with both hands, trying to keep him from escaping.

Yet, the mouse did.

It slipped right between Sirius' big hands and scurried about the wet grass. Harry tried to go after it, but the rain had made his clothes as heavy as lead, the water dripping from his messy hair and onto his glasses and the lack of light made it impossible to see, and the popping sounds of the Aurors apparating in were distracting. Desperately he called to them, "THE MOUSE! CATCH THAT MOUSE!" But the Aurors couldn't hear him, or if they did, they ignored him, deeming the capture of Death Eaters a more pressing issue.

He felt his hopes of clearing Sirius' name shatter upon noticing that Wormtail had nearly reached the passage of the Whomping Willow. There he was again. Escaping much like he had almost four years earlier. And right when he thought there was no chance, he saw a

small bundle fly faster than his Firebolt toward the tree, swoop down to the ground, where it struggled.

Come on, Cicciobello, get him! Harry pleaded in his mind, hoping against hope that the doll would catch the man responsible for their parents' deaths. And just as he thought that, Cicciobello raised himself in the air once more, holding a mouse in his hand that looked like it had been tied with its own tail.

"I caught him!" The doll shouted. Somehow, Harry didn't find it strange at all to hear the pure loathing in Cicciobello's high pitched voice, rather than his usual taunting banter. After all Ciccio knew what had truly happened. Knew that Peter was the reason that Lily and James had not been alive the moment that he'd come out of the time capsule once again.

But before Harry could sigh in relief, he heard Hermione shriek sharply behind him. "HARRY!" He whirled around, his wet heavy robes hitting his legs painfully, to see Hermione's horrified face as she watched Voldemort's dead body. Out of its mouth a thick, black tar like substance was gurgling out, spilling on the wet grass like ink out of a tipped bottle. Obviously, Voldemort had taken precautions, expecting something of the sort this night. And he watched in pure terror as the substance began to lift itself in the air, floating like vapor cloud, though looking like the world's thickest wad of tar.

Instinctively, Harry raised his wand, poising it for attack. He didn't know what he intended to do exactly. Maybe immobilize it, though he wasn't sure if that would work on a floating ball of tar. Or maybe petrify it, but he had no idea if that would work either.

In any case, before he even managed to enunciate the first word of a hex or spell, he was suddenly taken over by the most blinding pain he'd ever experienced in his entire life. He felt all the bones in his body snap, break and shatter, his skin and muscles splitting open in several points. His own screams were deafening him.

As he doubled over in atrocious torment and his life coming to an end, he saw Voldemort's tar fly high, higher than his barrier had, and disappear into the dark of night, and then, his vision went black, the

effect of three Ciciatus spells placed on him at once by enraged Death Eaters.

In the night, the pained screams could be heard for miles.

o*o

Where was he? All he could see were blurry outlines and black night. Around him there were sounds of pain and despair.

Where was he?

He was lying on something soft. Was he dead?

Next to him, he could hear someone crying. A girl. She was trying to be quiet, but it seemed that her pain was too great. He wanted to speak to her, comfort her, make her laugh and forget her sorrows, but his mouth wasn't responding to his commands. He tried several times, yet his mouth hadn't opened at all. It felt as though it had been closed shut.

After one last try, he managed to get his lips to slit open (though he thought he'd lost at least one layer of skin with that move) and made a strangled sound. Strangled as it may have been, the girl next to him heard him. Her head snapped up. Quickly, moving as though she thought that if she didn't hurry it would disappear, she pulled out her wand and made light come out of its tip. "Harry," he heard her whisper in fervent wonder.

As wonderful as her soft, pleading voice was to his ringing ears, he wasn't able to suppress a pained groan at the effect the sudden light had on his eyes. How long had he been gone? His eyes, his voice, his body, they all felt as though they'd never been used before.

"Oh, sorry," he heard her whisper, as she lowered the intensity of the light and dropped her wand on a nightstand next to him. "Madame Pomfrey said it would hurt," she said apologetically. He felt her hand behind his neck. "Here," she whispered, placing something against his lips. A glass filled with a drink. "It tastes horribly, but it will make you feel better." Actually, his taste buds were as numb as the rest of

him, mind included, but once the thick substance made its way past his throat, he felt his senses come back to him.

Along with his memories.

The first thing he recognized, once his eyes were able to focus enough for him to see, was who was standing before him. "Hermione," he whispered, his spirits rising far faster than should have been possible. She been crying, and a lot, judging by the dark color that circled her eyes. She was also covered in bandages, the most noticeable around her neck, which brought him to his next recognition. He was in the Hospital Wing.

And that inevitably brought him to the recognition of why they were there. The battle. It was all so fuzzy in his mind that he wasn't sure if it was real, or if he'd dreamed it. "What happened?" He asked her. All he remembered was Voldemort laughing, thunder, rain, wind, Sirius screaming, Wormtail running, and then Hermione screaming for him. After that, it was all a blank.

"Three Death Eater hit you with Cruciatus, all at one time, right before the Aurors got to them," she told him, after a moment's pause. "You're lucky you're alive, Harry. You have no idea what you'd looked like then. Madame Pomfrey had to completely reconstruct your spinal cord, and the rest of your limbs, and your skin...oh, Harry, you were so lucky you didn't get any cerebral damage!" She was trying to hold back tears again.

"Why didn't they use the killing curse?" That would have been a quicker way for them to get rid of him.

"They did," Hermione whispered, and at Harry's raised eyebrows she continued. "Ciccibello...he threw Wormtail at me, so that he could intercept the spell before it reached you...he took four hits."

Oh, Merlin! "How is he?"

Hermione smiled reassuringly. "A little banged up, but Professor Flitwick and Lupin are putting him back into shape," that was a relief. He would have never thought that the doll would help them that much.

But Lily had obviously known. Otherwise she wouldn't have placed him in the time capsule.

"How long have I been out?" It felt like he'd slept a hundred years.

She sniffed again. "Another hour and it would have been exactly four days," another snuffle had followed her answer.

"What about Wormtail? Did the Aurors get him? And Sirius?" If Wormtail had escaped again, Sirius would be given the Dementor's kiss!

"Well, at first the Aurors captured him, and they were trying to take him back to Azkaban to give him the kiss. They thought he was a Death Eater," oh, Merlin, no! "But Dumbledore convinced them to interrogate both Peter and Wormtail—after they restored him to his true form—under the effects of Veritaserum," Harry's eyes swelled with hope. "We can't see them, they're both in custody with the Ministry, but there will be a hearing in May, and there are very good chances that Sirius' name will be cleared.

Harry smiled, and thought back to other parts of the battle that hadn't been clear on him. "Hermione, what about Snape?" He remembered that the Potions master had been sent face first into the mud by one of his very own house members.

Her face darkened. "He's not doing to well," she told him. "Millicent Bullstrode hit him in the back, shattering two of his vertebrae, and he laid unconscious face down in the mud until the Aurors came. If they'd come a second later, he would have died from lack of oxygen. His lungs were filled with mud, and his face was already swollen when they pulled him out. Madame Pomfrey said that he was almost as hard to save as you were."

Harry nodded. "It was better for him that way," Hermione knew what he meant. "At least he didn't have to choose sides this way." However, Harry didn't think that the teacher would have been happy about that.

"Hermione, what about Ron?" Harry had lost sight of him, nearly the same second that the rain had begun to fall.

"Oh, he's fine," Hermione waved him off, "though he's still trying to impress Krista with these completely fictional tales of what happened. It's as though he doesn't even remember that she was there," she laughed. "Although now he spends most of his time trying to keep Malfoy away from Ginny. He won't accept the fact that Draco saved her life. Poor Krista has to petrify him each time he sees Malfoy," it was good to hear her giggle, but a dark thought made its way into Harry's mind.

"What's going to happen to the school, Hermione?" Her expression darkened considerably.

"I'm not sure," she replied honestly. "It been since the battle that Dumbledore had been going between Aurors for interrogations, and questionings with Ministry officials. Nobody really knows what to do since Fudge and half of his staff were fighting with the Death Eaters, but I'm afraid the school—" she was interrupted by an ancient, welcomed voice.

"Will have to close for a short time, I'm afraid," Dumbledore's voice came from the foot of Harry's bed.

"What? Why?" Harry nearly screeched. He knew that something of the sort would have to be done, but he would have never expected the Headmaster to allow it.

"Because at this moment the Ministry is afraid that the school is not a safe place," Dumbledore replied, "and we will close for no longer than a month, to give us time to take better precautions, and strengthen our protection." His tone was final.

"Miss Granger, as you are from a Muggle family, Mr Weasley and I deemed it safer for you and your parents to stay at the Burrow until your return," he told her. "Your parents have already been informed, and will be waiting for you there in two days, when all the students will be sent back to their homes," as though catching Harry's question

he added. "You, Harry, will have to go back to your uncle's home. They have been informed as well." And with that he left.

He wished he'd died in the battle. But Voldemort was still out there, and Dumbledore had said that the only safe place for him would have been with his uncles. He trusted Dumbledore, and so he would suffer for that one month. He was glad that there had been no deaths during the battle. Death, however, seemed a much better option than going to live with his uncles for a month.

Harry hadn't noticed, hiding in the dark shadows of a corner, a black bubble of tar, watching his every move, tailing him everywhere, and waiting anxiously for his night of power, to be able to get sweet revenge. The time was near, and he would not lose Harry until it was time to kill him.

And Harry was far too numb to feel the burning above his right brow, trying to warn him of impending doom.

o*o

A week. It had been a week since Hermione had gone to stay with the Weasleys, and, though enjoyable a stay as it was turning out to be—especially for her parents—she found herself becoming more and more anxious by the day. There was something bothering her. And now, she was finally going to find out why.

She'd been trying to look deeper into it for months, but, no matter where she looked, the writings of Vatis Divinus had been banned from every bookstore, library, or referring index. Coincidentally, just the previous night, when Molly Weasley asked what had been wrong, and Hermione had explained, the woman laughed, and told her that she had one of his books from when she was young and fixated with Divinations. The last one he'd written before he was called a heretic prophet.

And now she understood why.

Anyone who didn't know and love Harry Potter, and believed truly in him, would have thought that the author of such unlikely events was a

raving lunatic—well, he was, but that was besides the point—his writing were considered purely fictional. Molly had lost interest before reaching the fiftieth page, but Hermione read on, and the more she read, the more terrified she became.

She'd finished the tome, read over it once more, and then did a third quick read through to make sure that she'd understood everything correctly. She had. Throughout the entire reading, the necklace that Harry had given her as a Christmas present was glowing so brightly within its carvings that she'd been forced to wear it inside her sweater so that it wouldn't blind her.

What she'd read had promised nothing good, and at the moment she was frantically looking over star charts, cross referencing between seven different charts, hoping against hope that they would still have time.

And then it became clear. Like the morning mist giving way under the sun. Its clarity was scary.

Suddenly she leapt to her feet, screaming at the top of her lungs, "Mr Weasley," no answer "MR WEASLEY!"

The shocked, terrified, worried, balding man ran to her. "Yes, what is it, Hermione dear, what happened?"

"Mr Weasley, we have to contact Dumbledore right away," she pleaded, "we need to tell him to go to Privet Drive and meet us there!"

Arthur Weasley was confused beyond his years. "Why? What's going on?" His voice was becoming as panicked as hers.

"It's Harry!" She told him urgently. "He's in danger, and something awful will happen to him if we don't call Dumbledore, and we don't go help him right away!"

He didn't ask questions, or stall a second longer. He didn't know how she knew, and he didn't care. He ran to make arrangements.

To be continued.

Author's notes: So, did that surprise you? Did any of you guys think that I would actually kill either Harry or Hermione? Well, you never know, I'm not done yet ^_^. Anyway, comment, criticisms, flames welcome at or simply leave a review.

Thanks for reading.

Pearl

Every parent leaves something behind for their children to remember them by. Lily Evans didn't know, when she left her diary behind, that it would help her son into knowing her and himself...or did she?

Disclaimer: ...

Trowa no Miko: if you like the sound of ear splitting screams, I think you might like this. Even if this is kind of mushy in my description. PadfootOldBuddyOldPal: My brother (SD_monkey) thanks you for changing server ^_^, as for the very smart questions that you've asked, they should be answered here in this chapter, but if it's not clear, tell me, and I'll specify more clearly. SWeeTkIMCHee: Sorry about the spelling mistakes, but the whole thing about ignoring D/G was intentional, to demonstrate that they were moving at an extremely low pace toward each other. If I failed in demonstrating that, well, sorry. And I don't think I'll ever publish anything. I write just for fun. Everybody's fool: Thanks for reviewing on Portkey (I'm pretty low on reviews over there _) humble subject: I think you're definitely right, but I also don't think that I'm a skilled enough writer to make actions seem that important (I've tried and failed, but, as they say, practice makes perfect). As always, thanks for reviewing.

On another note, I don't know what to think about this chapter, each time I think about it I have this 'I'm proud of writing this, but also ashamed of it' kind of deal thingy. I don't know it's weird. Anyway, this is pretty much the last chapter of the story, but I'm writing another one of graduation (which you will all throw rotten tomatoes at me for because of how I make the Dursleys act), and an epilogue. For the epilogue I want their time capsule to be reopened, but I'm not sure of who should do it. Any suggestions? Give me suggestions, and you might see it happening!

I hope you'll find this good enough.

And now, on with the fic:

Harry Potter and the Knowledge of a Mother

Chapter 17: Blinding Light

Ugh, I hate travelling by floo powder. Hermione thought as she landed on her rump in what she knew was Miss Figg's home, an old lady, friend of Dumbledore, who lived down the street from Harry (to be able to keep watch over him), and had a strange fixation for cats. Oh, her home smelled of cabbages, too. And at the moment, she was explaining to Dumbledore that something strange was going on in Privet Drive lately.

The old Headmaster, along with McGonagall, Snape, and Mad-eye Moody, must have either Apparated a short time before she—with Ron and his father—had burst through the chimney, or they used a portkey. She guessed the latter, since Dumbledore was holding a cat shaped key-chain that really didn't seem to suit him much.

Oh, but what was she sitting there lost in thought for? They were running out of time!

"Miss Granger," Snape called to her coldly, "would you be so kind as to explain why we had to come to this foul smelling cat pound without notice?"

"Well, we don't have much time, but, in substance," she squirmed to hold the three tomes in her arms better, to pull out a thick leather bound book that both she and Snape were already familiar with, "several months ago, Harry and I, while reading Lily's diary, read an interesting entry about a vision that she'd had—believe she spoke of it to Professor Dumbledore—and since it sounded familiar I decided to look into it. A short while later I found out that it sounded very much like what Vatis Divinus had prophesied, and we also found Lily's journal, where she wrote all her visions. In it, what had already interested me became clearer, but there were several matters that were left untouched," Hermione explained.

"Does this all have a purpose, Miss Granger?" Snape's tone was almost threatening.

She wasn't fazed. She kept on going with her retelling, seeming as though she hadn't even heard him. "When I went to stay with the Weasleys I found that Mrs Weasley had a copy of the last book that Vatis Divinus had written before being exiled and marked as heretic.

Cross referencing that with Lily's visions I managed to get a full premonition."

"And what does it say?" Snape was sceptical.

"It said that after the return to power of the Dark Lord, he would try to attack the Boy-Who-Lived, but would fail, and wonder about as a thick shadow—" Snape interrupted again.

"We already knew that, Miss Granger, it already happened," he taunted her.

"Yes, but the next part didn't!" She shouted at him. The man jumped at the unexpected bound of brave anger on her part.

"Let the girl speak Severus," Dumbledore mumbled with a poignant look. Snape looked petrified.

"Thank you Professor," she mumbled before going on. "The other part said that, shortly after his second fall, the Dark Lord would get one last chance! Precisely in the moment in which the skies would align themselves the way they had the night he perished the first time...well, he would receive powers like none he ever had before if only he managed to possess the body of the one that brought him down!" Oh, Merlin, she felt like crying! "And we only have a very short time left before that happens!"

McGonagall was the first to understand. "The Wizard's star! The comet that rotates around the Earth and can only be seen by wizards! That had passed right over the Potter's home when they died!"

"Yes, and it's about to go over Privet Drive!" Hermione shouted. Why were they still sitting here? They had to leave now! She began to make her way to the front door.

"Hermione, wait!" Ron's familiar, scared voice stopped her. "Did the prophecy say...how Harry could defeat him?"

Her face crumpled, "It did...but it's not clear. All it said was that if two lights united to give strength to each other, than neither of them

would dim, and they'd make the dark disappear." She wasn't a prophet, or a Seer, and she'd dropped Divination before the first term was over. She didn't know how to decipher that, and, judging by the other's faces, neither did they. Dumbledore knew, but she understood that he wouldn't tell, and probably for good reason. So she turned on her heels, books clutched tightly to her chest as though they were a shield, and walked out the door to run to Privet Drive number 4. She could hear the rest all following close behind.

As soon as she reached the door she found her hand pounding on its wooden surface desperately, bruising her fingers. A while later the door opened to reveal Dudley, even larger than last time. Must be hard to move with all that fat on his bones, no wonder he took so long.

"Hi, Dudley, I'm Hermione Granger, remember me?" Oh, Merlin, he was ogling her again! Not waiting for him to reply she let herself in the door. "Where's Harry, I have to talk to him right away! It's really important!"

In reply she heard a scream from somewhere under the stairs, and the voice emitting it was all too familiar. "Harry?" she asked, worried and surprised. Another incessant shout of pain came from the closed small door of the cupboard. "Harry!" This time her voice was terrified. She threw herself at the door handle, calling out to his name. "Harry! Harry! Can you hear me?" Another agonized sound answered her. There was no key in the door.

As Aunt Petunia walked in the hallway, followed closely by Vernon, to see what all the fuss was about, Hermione shouted at her. "There's no key! Where's the key? Do you have it?" Dimly she realized that she was crying more than she ever had in her life. It couldn't be Voldemort. He couldn't be in there with him! It was too early! The comet had yet to pass. It couldn't be him yet!

Petunia, who had the key in her pocket, was terrified and immobilized by the girl's display. They had locked him in there because of all the noise he was making. Hermione, irritated at her, pulled out her wand, not caring that there was an ex-Auror behind her who could report her to the Ministry. Yet, that very same Auror told her to open the door, because Harry was injured and bleeding. Moody must have been

able to see through the door, and that was all that it took for Hermione. Pointing her wand at the offensive door she called out, "Alohomora!" Her shout was so potent that it nearly tore the door off its hinges. Harry's shouts were even louder without that barrier. Moody removed the door from her view, giving her, instead, one of Harry.

And it was horrible.

There he was, lying on what must have been the poorer excuse for a bed that she'd ever seen, holding his hand to his forehead as though it would be able to dim some of his pain, his body convulsing and bending at terrifying angles, and his limbs hitting and slamming against the walls of the cupboard because it was too small for him. There was a trickle of blood at the corner of his mouth, his lips split and bruised from his attempts at keeping quiet, he was sweating profusely, and, when the sudden flood of light into the cramped space reached his eyes, Hermione saw that his hand and almost the entire right side of his face was covered with blood, his glasses covered in it. His scar was bleeding.

"Oh, Merlin! Ron, help me pull him out of there!" She ordered. The space was so cramped that, with all the pain he was in, he would have only injured himself further if he attempted to make his way out alone. In any case, he made no resistance. Oh, but was he even really there! At that terrifying thought, the second that she managed to get Harry out of the small cupboard she turned him over to look at her, shaking him slightly. "Harry," she whispered urgently, "Harry, look at me! Look at me, Harry! Do you recognize me, Harry? Who am I?"

"Hermione," he whispered so quietly that she almost thought she had imagined it. But he had spoken her name, or rather coughed it out past the blood, and when she looked into his eyes she knew. Nobody could ever look so sweetly at her through all that pain. This was Harry.

"You're still you," she whispered, almost laughing. As another bout of pain seized him, she held him to her bosom, ignoring the books that she'd dropped the second that she noticed that Harry was, as a matter of fact, locked in a cupboard. Cradling him in her embrace,

trying to dampen his pain, she turned to the rest looking on in astonishment, telling them, "It's ok, don't worry, he's still Harry. Voldemort didn't get to him yet, but he must be close, or he wouldn't feel this much pain."

Dudley began laughing. Cackling. As everyone, his parents included, turned to him bewildered and scared, Harry's sounds of pain stopped immediately, almost as though someone had turned off his audio button, like on a TV screen. His hand left his blood stained forehead, and the now reopened scar was bleeding no longer. It had never been like that. It had never bled.

The two events put together were ringing alarm bells in everyone's mind.

"He's here," Harry whispered, from within the safety of Hermione's arms. She looked at him, understood that he wished to stand, and helped him in doing so. Dudley had stopped cackling, but the glare that he was sending Harry's way would have sent a lesser man whimpering to his mother. "Leave him alone, you ugly parasite," he ordered, wheezing after all the strain his screaming had put his voice through.

Again, 'the ugly parasite' began to cackle, this time more slowly, eerily. Out of the large nostrils of Harry's pig faced cousin began to ooze out a black floating tar-like substance. Dudley passed out the second all the ooze was out of him, and he looked much thinner than he had seconds before. Voldemort. The only difference between now and a week earlier was that now, the tar cloud was much, much bigger, thicker, and in the midst of it the outline of a face could almost be seen. Even if it wasn't very defined, Harry knew that face far too well already. Voldemort. Just thinking the name infuriated him and gave him more strength. The strength that came with the wish to protect the things and people he loved.

"I really wouldn't have expected this out from you, Tom," Dumbledore commented, as, once again, he pulled out a sherbet lemon from his robes. Most people would have seemed insane taking that out in such a crucial moment, but when the ancient professor did it, it was taunting, teasing, and insulting to the person addressed. "Living off a

Muggle's energy," he mumbled, taking a sip. The dark cloud that was once known as Tom Riddle was an easy prey to this.

"Exactly the reason why it worked!" He spit back. "I don't know and I don't care how you found out, though I suspect that the filthy Mudblood had something to do with it, but it's too late. I've been living off that pig since he was at the station, to pick up Harry a week ago. And from him I've taken so much strength that I don't even need my wand to wipe all of you out. He was filthy and stupid, and he had no suspicions that there was someone living off of him. And it was much, much fun watching the great Harry Potter, the Boy Who Lived, passing his days as a slave to these Muggles," he spit the last word out.

So that was how he'd managed to be there. The Dursleys home was probably the most protected place besides Hogwarts for Harry, but all its protection was good only if who was after him was actually seeking him out. It had no effect on someone that had possessed one of the Dursleys, who knew where Harry was and lived with him.

"And Harry never even noticed," he began to cackle again.

This time, it was Mad Eye Moody that stopped his unseemingly laughter. "Are you really so sure about that?" He sounded much braver than he felt at the moment. "If he never noticed why does he have his wand taped to his arm under that sweater, and all those protective wards on himself?" He asked sharply.

"The wards were placed on him when he was in the infirmary," Voldemort replied confidently, "and he would be stupid not to have his wand with him all the time." It was true, even if Voldemort hadn't come for him, Harry would have still kept his wand with him at all times. Just in case.

"I don't know," Moody continued. "He seemed pretty sure that someone was living off that pig on two legs. Did you think he was here, Harry?"

Harry gave a cocky grin that he knew would enrage Voldemort. "Constant vigilance," he replied. "I didn't notice right away, but I was

sure that he was here the day after I arrived. By the second I knew he was with Dudley." Moody gave him an appreciative smile. Voldemort growled. Harry's eyes told of nothing but challenge. He was weak, he felt it, from all the pain and the constant exposure to his presence, but he had no intention of showing it.

The black floating substance began to circle him, and he circled as well. Harry didn't blink as Voldemort led him in the kitchen. The rest watched from the doorways, Vernon and Petunia terrified. Harry did his best not to look over at them, he had no intention of letting his enemy, his parents' murderer, know that he was worried for them.

But it was all for nought. Voldemort knew him well. "Aww, worried for your little Mudblood friend, Potter?" Harry automatically stiffened. "Don't worry, she'll get what she deserves when I'm done with you."

Impulsively, Harry ripped his wand from under his sweater, pointed it at the ground, and shouted out, erecting a barrier. "VALLUM SOBLATUM!" At first the wall of light was small, revealing just how weak Harry was at the moment, but the knowledge that Hermione would be safe outside of it gave him the strength to make it grow enough to reach all the windows and doorways. He was effectively locked in with Voldemort, much like he had been a week, prior, only that this time Hermione wasn't in the Dark Lord's reach, and Cicciobello was still at Hogwarts getting fixed up. And he didn't know whether to be glad of it, or scared.

"Harry!" He heard Hermione's shout from the other side of the barrier. He wouldn't look at her. He wouldn't let Voldemort know exactly what she meant to him. "Harry!" She screamed as she began to bang on the barrier, almost trying to break through it. But all that managed to do was make a dull, muted sound, almost as though the barrier absorbed it. And it felt cold, freezing beneath her already bruised knuckles, wet and mobile as water, but as unpenetrable as steel. And it made her desperate enough to beg Harry to let her in. "Harry, Harry, please, let me in, there isn't much time left," dimly she noticed that her eyes had filled with so many tears that she could only see blurry blotches of color through the salty water covering her vision.

Harry was getting on edge, he didn't know what Hermione meant by time running out, and her tears were ripping him to shreds, while Voldemort incessantly droned of what he would do the people Harry loved once that he would take over his body.

In the meantime, Hermione kept trying to get Harry's attention by banging on the barrier, when she finally looked at the miniature star chart that she kept on her wrist as a watch. It worked much like a watch, the only difference being that instead of showing the time, or the hours, it showed the moving of the stars overhead. She'd programmed it to warn her when the comet would be in alignment. And, just as her eyes fell on it, a red glow began to shine out of it, warning her of doom not too far behind.

Terrified, she looked to Harry, still circling around Voldemort, light sweat across his bloody brow, his wand poised for either attack of defence, while the black bubble of tar kept on talking of torture and murder. And, as though coming out a tunnel of stunned fear she shrieked to him, "HARRY! IT'S TIME! WATCH OUT!"

Without stopping to ask questions, or even think, full of trust in Hermione, Harry shouted a strong stunning spell that Dumbledore had taught a couple months back in Duel Training, but he was too late. Just as the burst of red light exploded from his wand, Voldemort solidified before his eyes, the face within the tar mists becoming more defined, and launched himself into the boy's chest, where his heart was, effectively disappearing into it, the tar oozing through his clothes, skin, organs, until it reached Harry's soul, where he would break the boy.

Hermione watched in horror as she saw Harry's vision turn inward, his eyes wide open, his spectacles bloody from his earlier pains, and his body collapse on the ground much like a lifeless, boneless rag doll, his limbs bent at impossible angles, convulsions running across his entire form, more blood trickling from his mouth.

"HARRY!?" Hermione screeched as she dropped to her knees, tears pouring from her eyes like water from a waterfall. "HARRY!" Then she turned to a whisper. "Harry, please, Harry! Let me in! Let me in!"

Behind her, Ron spoke to Dumbledore. "There must be some way to break through this bloody barrier!" He shouted, outraged, angered, and scared. He'd never, in all their adventures, felt as useless as he did now.

"No," Hermione whispered, certain and hopeless. "No, these barriers are impenetrable," her tone was defeated and desperate. "The only way I'd be able to cross it would be for Harry to call me in!" She sobbed, and turned to pounding the wall of liquid light. "Harry, let me in! Let me in!"

An old, comforting, wrinkled old hand rested on her shoulder, shooting her, to some extent. She looked up in the twinkling half moon spectacles of her headmaster, professor Dumbledore. "You'll go through soon enough."

She believed him, maybe because he was a Seer, yet she wasn't very comforted by the thought. "Oh, Harry, what's going on inside of you?"

o*o

Harry felt as though he was suffocating, smothered by something greater than himself, something that he would never be strong enough to fend off, much less defeat. Black was all around him, and it was thick, and sticky, and heavy, and it left no room for hope. He struggled against it, tried to regain control of his body, but he was already so weak, and each attempt to fight it seemed only able to give more strength to his enemy, wearing him out considerably. He wouldn't be able to hold out much longer.

And then, almost as though hearing his thoughts, Voldemort, all around him, began to cackle, the sound coming from everywhere and nowhere, filling him, echoing within him, giving him a sense of foreboding that chilled him to the core. "You know what the best thing about possessing your body will be, Potter?" He asked rethorically. "It will be breaking your little Mudlood, that filthy Granger! How do you think she would feel looking at your face, and knowing that you're in there but without the power to stop me from killing her, knowing that

you will never really be there anymore? How would she react in those few seconds that she'll have left to live?"

Harry's entire body was wracked by horrible, terrified shudders, and, unconsciously, he called to her.

"Hermione..."

o*o

Hermione...

She jumped to her feet as she heard his voice calling out to her.

"Hermione?" She heard Ron say her name in surprise as she fervently wiped away at the tears that still filled her eyes.

She smiled at him. A smile that spoke of nothing but hope. "He's calling me," and with that, she placed her hand against the cold, horrible barrier, and walked confidently through it, her body giving a impulsive shudder at the feeling of thousands of iced needles pricking her as she did. Ignoring it, she stepped around him, cradling his head in her arms, his back resting on her bent legs.

His eyes were still turned inward, but they weren't the glaring white that had been before anymore. No, there were horrible black mists swirling on them, and, upon closer inspection, she realized that the mist was beginning to spot his skin. Fighting back the tears she held on more tightly to him. She didn't know what to do, but whatever it was, she knew that she would be able to help him. She had to think that, or feel completely lost.

"Oh, Harry," she whispered, "Oh, Harry, please hold on. Please! You're so strong Harry, you can't lose against him!" She told him, and watched as he seemed to breath in more deeply, as though he was taking the breath and strength to fight back. She was encouraged by it. "Harry, you're strong, you can do this!" She told him confidently. "And...if you don't think your strength is enough...then...take mine!" She said, leaning over to him to whisper in his ear, her nose grazing his cheek. "Take my strength, Harry," she ordered him, watching as

his eyes filled with black, and then leaned over, placing a soft kiss on his lips, trying to breath her strength into him. It wasn't likely to work, she knew, but, at the moment, it was all that she could think of. After all, Harry, at the moment, was very weak and needed all the strength he could get, while Voldemort was stronger than he'd ever been before.

But, to Hermione's surprise, her attempt of giving him some of her power seemed successful. She felt herself being lifted off of the ground, floating several inches above the floor, Harry, body limp and eyes still filled with black mist, did the same. She realized that, inside of all that was happening, he was probably completely unaware of what going on outside of it, and, in all honesty, she was too. But whatever was going on around her, she wouldn't mind so long as she had the certainty that it would help him. Since the first day she'd met him, all she'd ever wanted to do was help him.

And, as she took his hands in hers and laced their fingers together, she knew this was right. Taking a deep breath, she closed her eyes, and whispered again, "Take my strength." And then her mind went blank. Her sight turned inward, so that she would never know that in that one second the mist in Harry's eyes began to disappear. Pillars of blinding light began to shine out of both their eyes, their mouths, their ears, their hands, their laced fingers, their skin. They began to hover in spinning circles around each other, their speed building continuously, until, finally, they couldn't be seen amongst the blinding light that illuminated the room in its completion. Strong, blinding, glaring white light was everywhere, all around them. They were pure light in that moment.

And somewhere in the middle of that Harry began to regain his consciousness. He realized that he could breath better than he had in months, feeling strong, powerful, free. And freedom was the most unexpected feeling of all. The light was beginning to die down around them, and they were able to open their eyes. The first thing they noticed was each other, and there was nothing more reassuring that to see the one face that they loved the most smiling at the other in triumphant understanding. They weren't very clear on what had happened, but they knew that they had done it.

And then they felt their feet touching the ground, while over their heads a whispered warring, almost like a small windwhirl, could be heard. They looked above to see a cloud of black ashes hovering over them.

"Harry," Dumbledore called his attention.

Without hesitation, the pair moved out of the ashes' range, while Harry pointed his wand to the top of his barrier and brought it down with a quick: "Desilire."

Before the barrier was even all the way down, Snape, tight faced and apparently enraged, moved over to stand close enough to the whirling ashes, but far enough that he would not be touched by it when it would drop. And drop it did. Nearly instantly, and directly at his feet, though it seemed to float back in the air for a second. "Resistance is futile," he muttered bitterly as he took some lighter colored dust out of a pouch he'd been holding and spread it so that it almost completely covered the ashes.

Confused, Ron, Harry, and Hermione, tried to step closer, to see what he was doing, but he gruffly pushed them back. "Watch it, or you might get singed," his tone was scary enough to make them back up till the doorway. And then, out of the folds of his robes, he took a vial filled with glowing red liquid, stirred it within its confinement, and, after deciding that it was ready, smashed it in the center of the pile of dust and ashes.

Immediately, the pile of dirt took fire, and out of its bright flames, the outline of an agonized face could be seen. Voldemort's face. A voice growled in outraged pain, cursing the maker of the potion. Voldemort's voice. And then the outline tried to reach Snape, but the potions master threw more of the dust from the pouch onto the flames, making them grow in a sudden outburst. Voldemort's outline screeched like a Banshee, screaming his agony and his defeat.

He was dead.

And then the fire died, along with the voice and the outline. "To quote the Muggles," Snape mumbled haughtily, "Ashes to ashes/Dust to

dust." Then he pulled his wand out, pointed it at the burnt spot of the kitchen floor, and called out, "Evanesca!" And it was all gone. As though nothing had ever happened. Even the floor was as perfect as it had always been.

"My scar," Harry whispered, reaching his hand up to touch it. "It...feels strange."

Terrified by what it could mean, Hermione spun around to face him, her hand automatically reaching to move his bangs out of the way, but what she saw was not at all what she'd expected. "Harry! Harry, it's healing!" She told him excitedly. And it was true, before her eyes, the opened, bloody wound began to close up, the blood disappearing from his brow, and then, the cut that had always looked fresh, began to truly scar and turn thick, knotted, and white. It had become a true scar.

And that could only mean one thing.

"Your bond to Voldemort died with him," Dumbledore had told him. Hermione was certain of it.

"He's really gone," Harry heard himself say in surprise. After seven years of battles against him, sixteen years after their first fight, Voldemort was finally gone, never to come back again.

"But if that's the case, why didn't it just disappear?" Ron asked confused.

"Because its link to Lily is indestructable," Hermione replied confidently, and, for the first time in his life, Harry felt proud of baring a lightning bolt shaped scar on his forehead.

And then, almost as though there was almost too much to take in that moment, he felt his consciousness slipping away, and Hermione's small frame keeping him from thudding on the floor. He was too weak, and he'd just used far too much power to close the last chapter of his ongoing war with the Dark Lord. Though he wasn't aware at the moment, he was certain that only a few minutes later, Hermione laid down next to him, and joined him in the land of dreams.

o*o

Harry woke up in Dudley's second bedroom, warm and safe in the bed, a comforting presence next to him. He opened his eyes to see Hermione's sweet face, still asleep and as comfortable as he was, barely an inch from his face. Reaching to tuck a strand of her bushy hair behind her ear he felt the strongest wish to wake up this way every morning, her face the first he saw upon rising, the last he would see before falling asleep at night. And he wanted to protect her, be protected by her, just like what had happened before he fell asleep.

He couldn't be sure, because at the moment he'd been in a state of trance, but he clearly heard her telling him to take her strength, and then he'd felt her power seeping in through his mouth, as though she'd breathed it into him. Kissed it into him. Even if he couldn't be certain of it, it was a wonderful, reassuring, warming thought.

Muffled voices interrupted his train of thought from outside the bedroom door. He strained to hear them.

His Uncle Vernon was easy to hear, because of his usual tendency to shout when around those 'magical freaks'. "We don't know how to take care of his...illness!" He could hear him saying, probably referring to the scar that had bled so profusely, earlier. Codswallop, he thought. They just didn't want him around anymore, and he didn't want to be around them. He had no intention of sticking around to listen to his Aunt Petunia complain about the destruction of her kitchen floor, which was now completely restored.

Dumbledore's hushed voice followed. The more Harry knew the man, the most mysterious he seemed to him. Through Lily's diary, he'd found out that the Headmaster was a Seer, and, apparently, a strong one. Had he known about this from the beginning? Was that why he chose to simply let things unfold before him, while all he did was sip lemon sherbets and taunted Tom Riddle? Possibly.

And then he heard Mr Weasley's outraged huff. "The boy is a hero! And you treat him as though he were nothing but a common criminal!

I'll take him with me to my home!" His tone was final, and nobody argued with it.

Worried, Harry looked to Hermione, who was just rousing because of the muted shouts on the other side of the door. Wordlessly he put a finger to his lips, and she nodded, understanding that something important might have been discussed. Just then, new footsteps were heard, followed by Severus Snape's harsh, cold voice. "Mad Eye has gone to file his report in the Ministry and Minerva has already told everything to the Daily Prophet. She has already returned to Hogwarts."

"Good," Arthur Weasley replied. "As soon as those two wake up, we'll floo back to the Burrow," he announced.

"I would like to speak with Potter first," Snape sounded embarrassed in saying it, and Harry and Hermione looked at each other in confusion. What did he wish to speak about? It was true that Harry wanted to speak to his Potions master after what he'd done against Voldemort, but he'd thought that Snape would try to avoid him till the term was over. In any case, there were no objections from the hallway.

Whatever it was, Harry didn't want to think about it at the moment. He looked at Hermione, thoughtfully furrowed brow, nibbling on her bottom lip adorably before him. "How did you find out what was going to happen tonight?" He knew that she was amazing when it came to finding out things that nobody else would have ever guessed, but it was always wonderful to watch her face light up with the excitement of a challenging research.

She gave him a dazzling smile and hopped quietly out of bed, reaching for Lily's diary, which sat right on Harry's study desk, where she'd left it before joining Harry in their slumber. "It started from here," she whispered, so that she couldn't be heard outside of the room. "Remember when we read about that first premonition where she spoke about you?" She asked as she began flipping through the pages. He nodded. Encouraged by that, she went into a much more detailed retelling of how her research had gone. "That pendant you gave me for Christmas was a lifesaver, Harry! The carvings were

glowing so brightly when I read that passage written by Divinus that it almost blinded me!" And then she quieted down. "It's a good thing I found out about it when I did. If I hadn't we might have been too late."

He smiled at her. "You know that could never happen."

She blushed profusely, and looked down in the quickly flipping pages to hide it. But...what was going on? Instead of words, instead of the parchment looking blank because of the speed with which she flipped through them, there was a face. She gasped. The diary slipping out of her hands and landing with a soft muted thump on the bed. Lily's face!

Harry's eyebrow furrowed. "Hermione?"

She looked at him, her eyes wide in surprise. "Harry," she began, whispering a little too loudly and urgently. "Harry, I saw your mother!" She told him, taking the book back in her hands and sitting next to him to show him.

What was she talking about? And then he saw it, too. When she flipped to the first page, and let the pages run quickly through her hands, on the parchment there was the face of Lily Evans at age seventeen, before she became his mother, smiling proudly at him. "I love you, Harry," she whispered, her voice sounding old, proud, but distant. "I'll love you always."

Oh, Merlin! She'd known about him! She'd known about him far before she'd even married James! Then, Lily's vision turned to Hermione. "Take care of him. He needs you, Hermione. You're his light. Take care of each other." And only a second after she said that, the pages finished, and the image disappeared.

Both of them stared at the back of the thick, leather bound book. Lily had known about Hermione as well. Exactly how much had Lily known in her Hogwarts years that she hadn't reported in either the diary or the journal? Not knowing what to say, Hermione tried. "Harry..." she whispered. Oh, Merlin, her voice was so fragile it broke. She cleared her throat but found that fresh tears were coming to her eyes.

He placed his finger on her bottom lip, tracing it slightly and silencing her. "Don't say anything," he told her. "She already said everything for us." He was right. As she looked into Harry's eyes, the look of pure love he was giving her, she knew that there was nothing to add. Except maybe one thing, she thought as she watched him bringing her face closer to his. And then as though he was pulling her out of the fog of the last few months, he pulled her to him for a kiss that even time had to stop and wait in standby for.

Hermione drank it, drowned in it, lost herself in its depths, needing it more than the air itself. Needing it as much as a drug addict needed a fix after too long a period of withdrawal.

Suddenly a thought came to her as she pulled away. "Am I allowed to remember this one, or will I have to forget it, too?"

Harry smiled, and, laughing, told her, "You'd better remember every kiss we share from now on," and then pulled her in for another soul searing kiss. Thinking with a grin that there was the promise of many kisses yet to come.

o*o

"Did you want to talk to me, Professor?" Harry asked as he stepped into the living room that had been taken over, much to the Dursleys' chagrin, by the gruff, greasy potions master.

"Sit, Potter," was his monotoned reply. Harry did as told. "What you...saw me do in there, with...'him'..." he began awkwardly, "it never happened," he concluded finally.

Harry blinked. "What?"

"It never happened," he repeated. "I wasn't here. The only ones who helped you were Miss Granger and Headmaster Dumbledore."

Harry knit his eyebrows. "Why?" He asked. "You could be a hero," was he afraid of his ex-fellow Death Eaters coming to get revenge on him for having finished off their leader?

The reply, however, surprised him. "Because I owe it to your mother." Harry would have never expected that. But he nodded in understanding, and to close the discussion Snape told Harry that he was "Dismissed."

Harry stood, but, before leaving the teacher alone, he told him, "I'm sure she's very proud of you now." Snape seemed unaffected by it, but for some unknown reason, Harry knew that it had been the right thing to say.

A short few minutes later, Harry made his way to Miss Figg's behind Ron and his father, fingers laced with Hermione's, trying to think of all the things that had happened in such a short time, taking strength from her warm hand. He didn't know what to expect from school, or even when to expect school, but he knew that it wasn't over. Voldemort still had followers out there, and they would still come after him, but he knew he could live through it all if he was with her.

Because they were stronger when they put their forces together for the purpose of protecting each other.

To be continued.

Author's notes: I hope you all enjoyed this. Next chapter out on Friday. Please tell me what you thought of or simply leave a review.

Thank you

Pearl Drop Angel

Every parent leaves something behind for their children to remember them by. Lily Evans didn't know, when she left her diary behind, that it would help her son into knowing her and himself...or did she?

Disclaimer: Any of you out there who don't know what a disclaimer is? Thought so. Lets move on.

Jewel: Basically it was the end, but I just have a hard time of letting go of this story. Herm the Germs: I don't know if you've read my author's notes, but I still haven't read OotP (I'll start now though) so thanks for the spoilers *sniff* Taari: Yes, you can use Ciccio if you give me full credit (but remember that he is a creation of the toy company Giochi Preziosi, I just own his personality). Oh, and send me a copy of your story, too. Clare: Yep, that was definitely in a hurry, but I don't really understand what it was that Hermione was supposed to resolve with Molly...did I miss something about my own story? Marybecca: I cried at the thought that I made you cry *_^ Daphne S: Okay, either you don't know what disappointment is, or you just like thanking people for inflicting awful things on you. Sorry if you didn't like it.

Anyway, I'll let you all know that when I had this planned out it did have a purpose, but then, with all the cheesy idiotic pointless crap that I couldn't seem to keep out of it, it became like this. Bring on the flames. And don't ask why I got the Creevy father to talk to Vernon, I'm still trying to figure that out myself.

And now: on with the fic

Harry Potter and the Knowledge of a Mother

Chapter 18: Life beginning

"Before you leave for your next course I will tell you your last assignment before your NEWTs, next week" McGonagall announced. Ron's voice above all was heard booing and complaining. "I believe you all would wish to know the assignment before detesting it," and with that most of the Gryffindor/Slytherin (the latter greatly diminished after the battle of Hogwarts two months earlier) quieted down,

knowing that when she spoke so the assignment had a good chance of being interesting.

"As you know the Graduation Ball will be held in a short time," that had been the main topic of conversation, besides the Quidditch games that had finally begun, since the return from the forced break. "Yet, none of you had robes," McGonagall pointed out.

"It wasn't in the list of required materials at the beginning of the year," one of the few Slytherins pointed out sourly. One of the main reasons why this Grad Ball was so argued over was the fact that, apparantly, it was to be attended by the students wearing their school uniforms. Not a pleasant idea.

"And for a good reason," McGonagall replied sharply. Many heads perked up. "Your last assignment will be the tranfiguration of your formal attire for the evening, which will be in entirely Muggle fashions," Dumbledore's idea. "I will grade your assignment at the dance, don't bother trying to cheat, I have taken precautions. I advice you all to use this last week to catch up on your lost studying before your NEWTs begin," and with that she dismissed them.

As the trio left the classroom, Ron was complaining, as usual. "How do they expect us to take the NEWTs after all we did this year? I mean, the diary, Duel Training, Training with McGonagall, the battle, a month of no lessons, and the Quidditch games!" While Harry told Ron that Duel and Animagus training had already been considered into their grades (as heavy extra credit), that the month with no lessons should have been used for studying, that Quidditch had never stopped exams, and that he'd hardly participated in the diary's reading, Hermione was smiling broadly, thinking that she'd started to rub off on her boyfriend, and that she couldn't wait for the dance to begin.

o*o

Mr Dursley was nervous as he sat behind his office desk. Moreso than he had been for the past two months. The worse two months that he could remember in a long time. His life had been hell since

that nephew of his had come home because his school had been closed down, and his lovely house had been invaded by freaks, his son had been possessed by the most evil of all of them, and the neighbors were still not satisfied with the feeble answers that he and his wife had been trying to feed them.

He scoffed angrily. Nobody even remotely believed that the blinding surge of white glaring light that had filled up the entire street was a result of a power shortage in the home's illumination circuit. And Miss Figg, who was a freak herself and had never told them, was only making it worse by going to everybody telling them that Harry was a wonderful boy and a hero to both worlds.

Two months had passed, and still, everyday, hundreds of owls flew everywhere with letters in their beaks, telling other freaks of what his nephew had done. That particular day there seemed to be five times as many. Obviously those idiots were up to something. And what was worse was that some of them knew him—how? He didn't wish to find out—and they would come up to him to congratulate him on what a wonderful job he'd done raising him.

Definitely the worst two months he'd passed in a long time. A knock at the door snapped him out of his thoughts. "Come in," he called gruffly.

Meekly, Christy, or whatever her name was, announced a certain Peter Creevy, who was there on appointment. Vernon grunted, and she let the man in, then leaving terrified. She was the third secretary this month. Looking at his notes, Mr Dursley noticed, that this Creevy fellow was a representor of a good company willing to heavily invest in his drills. His guest was also a little too cheerful looking for Vernon's tastes, but that didn't matter. This could possibly become the most important deal of his life. "Hello, Mr Creevy," he began, his round, red face broadening in his most 'friendly' smile. "Please have a seat! Would you like a drink?" He began to shower the man with attentions, taking out a bottle of fine imported liquor (for important clients only).

"Oh, please call me Peter," he began sitting down with a wide smile, "and a drink would be wonderful." Vernon grinned, pulled out two glasses, filled them generously, and handed a glass to his client, trying to start up a good lecture on his company's drills. But Peter interrupted him. "Actually, I already convinced my boss of using your drills, I came to speak with you for another reason," he said quietly, leaning forward in a manner of conspiracy.

Vernon's eyebrows furrowed. "Oh?" He asked as he went to put the bottle away.

"Yes, I wanted to talk about Harry Potter," Peter replied with a large, proud looking grin. The bottle almost slipped out of Vernon's hand. Then his grip tightened so much it was a miracle the bottle stayed intact.

"Oh?" He repeated, his voice tight now. "Harry?" The grip around the bottle tightened even more, almost as though it were his nephew's neck he pictured in his hold.

"My three sons go to school with him. Gryffindors, just like him. They all like him very much. They told me that he had a lot of problems in school because of who he was. Once a reporter wrote all sort of scandalistic articles about him, and even made him out to seem insane! Oh, but you must know all that already," Peter seemed to never draw breath, but as he kept speaking, it was Vernon's face that kept becoming red, as though there were no air reaching his brain anymore. "He must be very strong to be able to go through something like that like he did! You sure did a great job raising him, he's practically the savior of the two worlds! I'm sure that, if a Minister was at head of the Ministry now, Harry would have at least the second class Order of Merlin! I personally don't know anything about what it might be, but my kids say it's very prestigious!"

Vernon's smile was beginning to slip. And then, something that worked magic on him managed to work its way out of Peter's mouth. "Has the Senator come to congratulate you yet?"

As soon as the "S" word registered in Vernon's mind, the mouth was already forming the question, "What Senator?"

"Oh, you're right, he's retired now, but his ties at Buckingham palace are still so strong that most of us still call him with the name of Senator," Peter answered absentmindedly. Vernon's eyes were shining with stars.

"Why would a Senator come to congratulate me?" Not that he cared, the prospect sounded very proficuous.

"Why, on Harry's victory over You-Know-Who!" Peter replied as matter of factly as was possible. Vernon's expression must have shouted confusion. "Oh! You mean you don't know?" Vernon didn't even need to ask what it was that he didn't know. "The Senator's daughter and her entire family are magical! Very powerful, too. Last I heard the girl's oldest son was getting married to a very rich wizard who worked for the Ministry," he told Vernon.

Vernon's mind was spinning. How did someone become Senator when he had daughter and grandchildren in the weirdo community? He wanted to find out more about this.

Just then, he heard a tapping sound at his shoulders from outside the window. He turned around to see one of those tawny owls waiting for him to open, an envelope in its beak. He was pretty sure he recognized it from that first summer some years earlier when he burned over a hundred letters. The sight didn't really enthuse him.

"Ah!" Peter exclaimed, getting up and letting the bird in. "Must be from Hogwarts! Probably to tell of Harry's good deeds," the man seemed convinced that the boy could do no wrong. And he was also very rude! He was reading Vernon's post! "Oh, it's the invitation to Harry's graduation ceremony! I imagine that it must be rather wonderful at Hogwarts. Next year Colin, my oldest, will graduate, too. Can't wait for the day," he blabbered while handing Vernon the envelope, letter, and three tickets for the Hogwarts express.

There were too many questions that Vernon wanted answered. "Peter, would you like to have dinner in my home tonight?" If it meant getting answers this and more. Besides, just because the man's

children were freaks, didn't mean that he'd make one of Vernon's family float above the dinner table. Right?

Several hours later, after Vernon asked incessant questions to Peter—who had just dismissed himself—the round man sat thinking in his living room, thoughtfully rubbing his proud mustache.

That's it! He'd decided. "Petunia," he called as he walked in the kitchen to find his wife washing the dishes. She looked behind her shoulder to acknowledge his presence, and went back to wiping a plate. "We are going to that graduation!" He announced suddenly, sounding, scary as it may be, excited at the prospect.

The dish that was once in Petunia's hand was heard crashing on the floor. "What? Why?" She asked petrified.

"Well, you heard the man!" He repeated, as though it was an obvious answer to a stupid question. "One out of eight people knows about the wizarding world. One out of twenty is in close contact with either members of that world or that world itself. And Harry's their hero!" He was definitely too excited at the prospect. "It could be more good than we ever thought."

At that, even Petunia seemed eerily excited.

o*o

"Harry, look at McGonagall," Hermione's warm laughing breath tickled his ear as she told him to do so. With difficulty he managed to concentrate on something beside the girl that he was dancing with long enough to notice that their transfiguration teacher was making her way between the dancing couples with a notepad in hand, writing down grades for their last transfiguration assignment.

He chuckled half heartedly. Honestly, the only thing that had managed to really take his attention off his date for the night had been the earlier difficulty in keeping Ron from killing Malfoy for having appeared in the Great Hall with Ginny hanging on his arm. At first they'd bound him, then they'd told him that he couldn't hurt Malfoy

even if he tried because his sister was in life debt with him, and then they'd given up and handed him to Krista.

Somehow the chaos had stopped then. Which had left Harry lost in the arms of the girl he loved, with the thought of the hardest task of his life in front of him.

She'd truly stunned him tonight. She was always beautiful, but tonight. Tonight there were no words. Her hair had been loosely pulled back and arranged in the shape of roses, bunched at the nape, small white flowers placed in the center of each one and around loose curls, leaving her perfect face unmasked. Her knee length white dress, simple, with spaghetti straps and a wide skirt, conservative in cut, innocent in color, seductive in the fact that it left her back and calves bare (and undeniably sexy). Coincidentally, when he'd seen her descend from the Gryffindor dormitories he'd wanted to ask her right then and there, but thankfully, he'd managed to stop himself.

He sighed. She was so beautiful. He still could not understand how such a wonderful, loving creature could love him, of all people. She was the only one that knew him for what he was, and loved him for it. That, along with the fact that she was by far the most wonderful woman on the face of the planet, was what made her so beautiful in his eyes. Just the fact that she was Hermione. His Hermione.

"Harry?" Her soft, worried call brought him back to Earth once again for the tenth time that night. "Are you alright?" She asked, her eyes worried as they met his.

His eyebrows touched his hairline. "Of course, why wouldn't I?" After all, I'm near you. How could I not be alright? He asked her mentally.

She looked to the floor embarrassed, a blush tinging her cheeks, her light, slightly translucent make-up doing nothing to hide it. "It's just that...you seem so distracted. It doesn't look like you're having much fun...is there something wrong? Am I doing something wrong?" She was still so insecure of how he felt toward her. He told her everyday that he loved her, but she'd told herself that he couldn't possibly care for her as more than a friend for the past seven years. Seven years were hard to beat.

Harry looked outraged. "Of course not, Hermione! You're wonderful," he told her honestly. She blushed profusely, her eyes hopeful when she looked at him. "You're wonderful," he repeated, "but maybe I am a little distracted," her eyebrows furrowed at this. He seemed to be pondering something for a while. "Come outside with me?" Confused and curious, she nodded, took his hand, and led him outside, into the courtyard. The entire place had been filled with fairies and fireflies, and it was charmed to look as though the very air shimmered.

Romantic as it was, strangely enough, it was desolated, probably because it was still rather early. Which suited Harry just fine. He wanted to be alone with her. They walked in silence, Harry concentrating on the words he was planning to tell her, until they reached the outskirts of the lake, a lover's bench conveniently placed there.

She sat down, patting the seat next to her. He slid down next to her and sighed heavily. He'd never been so nervous in his life. But he knew he had to do this. Wanted to do this. He knew that Hermione was still not confident about what they had yet, and, in truth, neither was he. For seven years, they weren't allowed to love each other. It was hard to forget those, even with all the love that they shared everyday. Physically and emotionally. Every touch, caress and kiss was cherished. But the uncertainty remained. He needed to ask the question. Know that it was real. The night that Voldemort had finally died, they hadn't spoken, just kissed.

And maybe that had been a mistake. Maybe they should have discussed their feelings. But in truth, Harry had preferred it this way. He'd gotten to know Hermione as his girlfriend over the two months, grown to love her more with each passing day, gotten to the point that he understood that he couldn't possibly live his life without her by his side. Even if just for the reassurance of it, he needed to know.

"Hermione," he began finally, after the silence had stretched uncomfortable between them, "I need to say something...important..." he stumbled, trying to swallow the lump in his throat. Oh, Merlin, this was hard. He looked at her to see tears forming in her eyes. "Hermione?" He asked, worried and puzzled.

"Please, Harry," she pleaded, her voice strained and hushed, "don't say it," she sobbed. "Please, don't say it," she repeated.

Okay, now he was seriously worried. "Hermione?" She stood up away from him, hugging her arms around her.

"Please, Harry, don't say it. I can't look at you while you tell me that you just want to be friends," she begged. Oh, why had she worn make-up? She should have expected this. She should have at least charmed her mascara to be waterproof.

He watched her, shocked. "Hermione," he placed a hand on her shoulder and she cringed. He felt like crying himself, now. "Hermione, that's not at all what I wanted to say. You know that," he turned her around to face him. "Going back to being just friends would kill us both." It was only after he said it that he realized how stupid it had been.

She sobbed as she tried to turn again, but he held her. "You don't need to specify, Harry," she told him bitterly, looking away. "You've been painfully clear already."

No! No! This was not the way it was supposed to be. "Hermione, look at me," she refused to. He gently cupped her chin to lift her face, but she kept her eyes downcast. He could only think of one thing to do at that moment. He slowly inched his face closer to hers, giving her all the time to pull away. She looked like she was ready to bolt, but before she could he told her the only thing that came to mind. "I can't live without you," and when she froze at hearing his words she felt his lips graze hers in the most tender, sweet, innocent kiss that they'd shared yet. He was always tender when he touched her, and when he made love to her she felt like she would burst from all the love that he was filling her with, but this had been different from anything ever before.

With his gentle lips he was trying to fill her with the knowledge of the fact that he loved her more than his own life.

"I can't live without you," he repeated as he leaned his forehead against hers, his eyes closed, his tongue licking his lips. "I can't live without you," he pulled away slightly to look at her. This time she was returning his gaze. "That's what I wanted to tell you tonight," instinctively, he found his hand going to his tuxedo pocket, touching the small that he hid there through the fabric of his slacks. It wasn't the time to pull it out yet, but somehow it gave him strength, perhaps because of what it signified. "Hermione, when Voldemort possessed my body, at the Dursleys, he was making me lose myself by telling me of what he'd do to you once I'd be gone. I thought that, until then, I'd protected you by hiding what I felt, but I didn't, because he knew, when he was inside me, what I really felt about you. And in the end, I couldn't have survived without you. And I liked knowing that we'd protected each other," he took a deep breath before continuing.

"Everytime we make love in your room, I wake up earlier just to be able to watch you sleep. I love you, Hermione," he told her. " And I want to be able to watch you sleep next to me every day of my life. I want to hear your laugh, and watch your face light up when you talk about something new that you just learned. I want to protect you and be protected by you," his voice was choking by now. "Please, don't even joke about going back to being friends!" He begged. "Before we got together it was the best I could hope for...but now, I couldn't go back to that. I can't live everyday with the need to hold you, knowing that I can't!" He pleaded. "Tonight, I wanted to tell you this. I wanted to ask you...I wanted to ask you not to take your love away from me. Just...please, don't leave me. Not now, not ever." It was strange making this speech, because it had not been the one that he'd wanted to do. Or rather, it was, but the most important part thing that he'd wanted to say had been left out. But he understood that it would have to wait for another time. They were both still too insecure.

Hermione just stared at him, a tear escaping her eye, staining her cheek with her black mascara, and the darkest fear clutched at his heart. Oh, Merlin, she really doesn't love me after all. Nervously, he touched the small box in his pocket again. But she would never except it. Maybe he should just leave. And slowly, he began to back away.

As soon as Hermione realized what he was thinking she stopped him by grabbing onto his free hand, both of hers going to envelope his, bringing his fingers to her mouth so that she could kiss him tenderly. She kissed each knuckle as though it was sacred, another small tear escaping her eye. "A-are you...sure, Harry?" She asked uncertainly.

He tried to swallow the lump that had formed in his throat. He nodded. "Yes," he answered. "I love you, Hermione, and I know you love me," he knew he didn't sound as confident as he wanted to, but it seemed to reassure her, "so why are we still torturing each other?" He asked.

"I'm just really scared that one day you'll wake up and see that you could have it better," she told honestly, her face streaking even more.

"Hermione, there is no such thing as better. And even if there was, I wouldn't want it. I want you. It's always been you," he told her truthfully.

And then they kissed again.

The box in Harry's pocket untouched but not forgotten. This just wasn't the right moment to ask. The time would come soon.

o*o

"Thank God the NEWTs are over!" Draco Malfoy exclaimed as he stretched out on the grass by the lake, Ginny Weasley sitting at his side, smiling at his antics. It wasn't often that they managed to spend much time alone without Ron coming to break them up with a threat to Draco's life.

"What will you do after this?" She asked curiously. They'd never discussed the matter before.

He shrugged. "Well, everybody expects me to take my father's place in the Ministry," he replied uncertainly.

She knit her eyebrows. "So you'll do that?"

He shrugged again. "I don't think so," his eyebrows furrowed as well. "Maybe I'll further my studies of potions," he thought out loud.

"Would you like that?" He'd always been particularly fond of potions, and he seemed to have fun with it.

He thought before answering, "Yeah..."

She grinned at his uncertainty. "Than go for it!"

He grinned as well. Her enthusiasm was always contagious to him. Then a thought struck him, and he sobered. Noticing his change of mood she did too, and an uncomfortable silence befell over them. It stretched on until it was almost unbearable, until he asked, "Will you wait for me?" He'd spoken the words so softly that they seemed to have been whispered by the wind. But she knew she'd heard them from him.

And she answered the truth, like she always had. "Always."

Wordlessly, he slid his hand across the grass to hold hers. In agreement, in mutual support, and in love.

o*o

"Petunia, this isn't your first time! You should know how to do it!" Vernon shouted at his wife, who was, currently, staring at the barrier between tracks 9 and 10 as though behind it there were the lion's den.

"Oh, Vernon, please don't make me do this again, you don't know what it's like!" She whined loudly, getting the negative attention from several passers-by. Dudley stared at the barrier as though it would reveal itself to be a giant mouth out to eat him.

"Oh, look, dear, it's the Dursleys!" A feminine voice said behind them. They both turned around to see a couple that they'd met only once in their lives. The Grangers. They heaved a large sigh of relief.

That was, of course, till they saw Molly and Arthur Weasley behind them, followed by five young redheads, two of which were very familiar to the Dursleys. Fred and George.

"Hey, look, Fred! The pig in a wig grew up!" Exclaimed George.

"Yes, he's a pale whale now!" Replied Fred.

Dudley ran through the barrier screaming.

For nought, because once they'd all crossed the barrier, they all ended up sharing a train compartment.

And the three young redheads that the Dursleys hadn't known before, along with Mrs Weasley, were not any less abnormal then the twins (though they weren't quite as evil).

o*o

"Harry!"

Harry, along with Ron and Hermione, turned around to see the source of the voice that had called to him. A wide grin was born on the boy's face. "Sirius!" He called back, going to hug the man. "I knew they'd call you to come and watch the graduation!" Harry exclaimed, thanking God that the Dursleys wouldn't be coming. Not like they ever would anyway, unless they were out to make his life hell, but he couldn't picture them coming all the way to Hogwarts for them. Then again, it was their last chance. Tomorrow he would be living in a flat in Diagon Alley with Sirius, who had been cleared of charges two weeks earlier, after the hearing in which he and Wormtail had been questioned under the effects of Veritaserum. Peter Pettigrew had received the Dementors kiss right after the hearing had closed.

"Hermione!" The dark man called to her, enveloping her in his arms. "Why on Merlin's Earth are you not moving in with Harry and I?" He hadn't understood Harry when he'd told him that.

She shrugged, and Harry replied for her. "Because this way I get to court her. We never got to date much here at Hogwarts," he said,

enveloping her in his arms, effectively hiding her body under his Quidditch uniform. In a way, because of the way the year had unfolded before them, Harry and Hermione had never had a real chance to date. And even if they were practically already engaged, they'd both mutually decided that it was something that neither wanted to miss out on. They already knew each other inside out as friends, they wanted to know each other as lovers as well.

Sirius sighed. "So that means that I can't peek on Hermione in the shower until you two decide to grow up," he mocked. Harry made him see stars with a well placed kick between the legs. It was obvious that Ciccibello's education had been mostly Sirius's work.

"The day she moves in I kick you out," Harry huffed. He knew Sirius had been kidding, but the idea was still unpleasant. Besides, Sirius was always protected against this eventuality and had worn his 'armor', therefore, Harry's kick hadn't fazed him.

"Aw, brother's jealous," Ciccibello cooed from above their heads. Ron was with him.

"Ciccio!" Sirius shouted, his arms wide open.

"Papi!" Ciccio launched himself in his gut. How could Sirius take all those hits they had no idea. It seemed, though, that he would be receiving quite a few in the future, because they'd decided to keep the satanic doll with them in their flat. Harry's life was prospecting to be rather exciting.

"Ooh, look Vernon, they're over there!" A familiar voice squealed from behind Harry.

He wheeled around horrified. Oh, no! Even his eyes confirmed what his ears had told him. "A—aunt Petunia?!" He didn't know whether to scream or run for cover. Especially when she walked over to him and began plucking imaginary pills off of his uniform.

"Oh, here is my little Harrykins;" she cooed. Harry was ready to scream. She was dusting off his shoulders with a clothes brush, "don't you look handsome? These colors are wonderful on you!"

"Think she's under the Imperius?" Ron asked disgusted.

Harry, meanwhile was trying to back away from her, bringing Sirius to act as a human shield. "Aunt Petunia?" He asked uncertain.

"Yes, dear?" She asked, using the fake smile that she used when speaking to Mrs Crownings, the attractive widow who had recently inherited a large amount of money and lived next door.

This was really becoming eerie. "What are you doing here?"

"Why, we're here to watch you graduate," wait, that wasn't Petunia's voice. It was Vernon's! And there was Dudley, too.

"Hello, Harry, dear," oh, finally! A friendly voice. Mrs Weasley came over to give him a hug, then moving on to her own son, who complained about being greeted after Harry.

"Hey, Harry! I heard you and Hermione were going out!" Fred (or was it George?) patted him heartily on the back. Harry wasn't sure that he should have done that. Had Hermione even told her parents—who were, he noticed, standing right there behind him greeting their daughter—about their relationship?

"Yeah, good catch, Harry!" George (or was it Fred?) complimented him. "Mind if we borrow her sometime? That Holostar idea was brilliant!"

"Oh, but why are you two wearing your Quidditch uniforms?" Mrs Weasley asked confused. Usually the students wore graduating robes at the event, and she would know after her own ceremony and the ones of her four already graduated sons.

"Oh, since this year started so late we rushed all the games together, but then Dumbledore thought that it would be interesting to hold the finals before the graduation ceremony," Ron answered. "You should see the stands! They're four times bigger than usual."

Just then McGonagall's voice boomed from nowhere, almost like a loudspeaker. "Students and parents are required to reach the Quidditch field to watch the Quidditch cup finals between Gryffindor and Slytherin houses. The graduation ceremony will be held shortly after the game. All the non-magical people, please reach the courtyard where Head Girl Hermione Granger will be waiting to bring you to your assigned seats." And with that the announcement ended.

Hermione turned to Ron and Harry. "Go on, you two! You need to give your team the pep talk before the big game," she told them, slightly shoving them in the direction of the Pitch, which had been disinfested at about the same time the school had reopened after the battle.

Harry lingered however, "I want my good luck kiss first," and with that he pecked her quickly, not really getting the kiss he wanted because of the 'audience' and their distracting, mood disrupting sounds.

He ran away when he heard aunt Petunia say "Aww...they're so sweet, Vernon, they remind me of us when we were dating!" That was one heck of a scary thought.

"Hey," Ron whined, "why do you get a good luck kiss?"

Harry raised a skeptical eyebrow. "Huh?"

"Krista only kisses me if I win," he explained with a pout. "Says that way I play better."

Harry shrugged. "Suits you." He couldn't possibly live without Hermione's good luck kisses. Actually how had he survived till then?

o*o

The crowd cheered again as Julie Andies, a fourth year Chaser, scored against the Slytherin Keeper. The game was tied, 110-110. And it had lasted quiet a bit. It might have actually ended after the first two minutes, when he and Malfoy had both gone into a dive after the Snitch, had not his aunt screeched something completely untrue and distracting (their brooms lost control!), making both the Seekers

nearly fall off their brooms. Usually a game was full of shouts, and screams, and boos, and everything, but a horrified screech didn't happen often, so the game was thrown off.

Since the Snitch had been lost, he looked over to see Hermione putting some kind of mouth shutting hex on all the Dursleys, while getting an incredible amount of applause from the Muggle parents.

After that, the Snitch had disappeared. And so had his concentration. Somehow, at the most inappropriate moment, he'd begun to think of the little velvet box he kept in the folds of his uniform. He suddenly felt the urge to give it to Hermione, almost as though the ring was telling him that it was the right moment. But how could it be the right moment?! He was in the middle of a bloody game!

Concentrate, Harry! The sooner you catch the bloody thing, the sooner the game's over, and, of course, Harry had to catch the Snitch. It was his last Quidditch game. After vacation he would start his training as an Auror with Hermione. He wanted to close with a bang. And he wanted to celebrate the victory with Hermione.

And then, almost as though his thoughts had summoned it, Harry saw it. The Golden Snitch. It was hovering near the ground, just below Malfoy.

And that was a dilemma. Malfoy was closer, but he was faster, and had a better broom. Should he risk it? There was always the chance that his movement brought Malfoy's attention to it, but he could always count on better speed. He smirked. Maybe he could just have a little fun.

Turning his broom sharply away from Malfoy, Harry dove to the ground, and, as expected, he could hear Malfoy's broom right behind him, chasing him. Flattening his body against the broom, and holding himself in a position in which he'd be able to see the actual Snitch, he kept on precipitating to the ground, and then, when he was sure that Malfoy was concentrating more on what might have been beyond Harry rather than on Harry himself, he did it.

He lifted the angle of his broom by 90°, spinning his broom madly all the while for speed, reaching the spot where the Snitch had been fluttering when he'd seen it, and then catching up to the elusive little sphere, grabbing it while in the midst of a loop-de-loop. Just for effect.

The crowd went wild. But he cared little. He'd won. His teammates were all hugging him, crying, and all he could think about was Hermione. And so he burst out of the clutter of dirty, sweaty Gryffindors, and lifted himself to the Muggle section of the stands. Hermione was there, in the front row, applauding him, tears in her eyes. He simply held his hand out to her. He knew she still feared heights, but he also knew that she trusted him enough to ride a broom with him, no matter how high they'd go.

She stepped onto his broom, and, wordlessly, they kissed. It wasn't just the victory kiss. Something must have happened in the stands. He'd sensed it only moments earlier. "Hermione?"

She smiled sadly. "I made your aunt's mouth disappear, along with your uncle's and your cousin's," he smiled in return, he could have seen that for himself. "They...they were talking about you as though you were some sort of prize, and I just wanted them to stop, so I..." she trailed off.

"Thank you," he kissed her again. He rummaged through the folds of his robes and brought out the box that had been torturing his thoughts for weeks now. "I know this isn't the time to ask this. I actually wanted to ask you at the Grad Ball, but it just didn't seem like the right time. I said that I wanted to watch you sleep everyday of my life, and I meant it. I want to watch you fall asleep in my arms after we make love, and I want you to wake up next to me after I kiss you goodmorning," he took a deep breath before he continued. "Hermione, I'm asking you to marry me," she gasped, and fresh tears began to form in her eyes as she saw him opening the small box. Inside of it stood a thick band of white gold with intricate powerful carvings, and in the center of those celtic carvings were a sapphire and a ruby cut into each other, two halves of a whole circle.

The ring was beautiful, and it seemed to be made especially for the two of them. Maybe it was.

"Hermione, I love you," he told her again. "And I'm not asking you to marry me now, but I didn't want to give you a promise ring, like dad had given mom, because I want to look at you and know that the ring you'll be wearing on your finger will be there forever. That one day it'll sit next to a wedding band," he kissed her briefly. "I want to marry you one day. I want to be the father of your children, and I want to grow old next to you, holding your hand, protecting you while you protect me. Forever."

She was crying again. But she was smiling as radiantly as she had been the day Voldemort disappeared. And then she nodded once. "Yes," she whispered quietly, and, without even knowing it, he was slipping the ring on her finger, kissing her like there was no tomorrow, completely unaware of the crowd cheering them on and wishing them well.

He didn't know where the afternoon had gone by. He just knew that it was already time to board the train (thankfully he'd be sharing the compartment with Hermione and the Weasley children), that he'd already said goodbye to Hagrid (who had to run away to hide his tears) and that it was time to leave everything he'd come to know and love

The Graduating Ceremony had been nothing but a blur. All he remembered were a lot of lights and floating, and fireworks, and speeches, and giant Holostars. He didn't remember one word that was said the entire time. Maybe because he was concentrating entirely on the hand that was holding Hermione's, playing with the ring now shining on her finger. The only speech that he'd remembered had been Hers, probably because most of it had been about them.

And about leaving Hogwarts.

It had seemed as though she'd written it especially for him. And maybe she had.

"Coming to Hogwarts some of us were scared, because it meant that we would be starting a new life away from the safety of our parents' arms, a place where we were supposed to be capable of taking care of ourselves, because, at least for eight months, we would have to stay away from everything that we'd come to depend on.

"There were others though, that were excited. Coming here meant that they would finally find a place where they would belong, because in the Muggle world their powers were something horrible and detested.

"All of us have come to think of Hogwarts as our home. Here we've made friends that we will never forget, learned things that we couldn't have anywhere else, here we found a new life.

"Here we found a new light to live by.

"And now, we're leaving Hogwarts. It's an unsettling thought, because now that light won't be there to guide us in our lives anymore. We won't have our teachers giving us the advice that most of us found vital. We won't be together the way we are anymore, because all of us are going in different directions. But most of all, we'll have to leave our home.

"Honestly, I'm a little scared, but Hogwarts taught me that I can walk any path so long as I can hold the hands of the people that I've come to love.

"After all, Hogwarts is only a castle. This wonderful castle with its enchanted ceilings, and moving stairs, and talking paintings.

"Wonderful as all that is, there's more to Hogwarts than that. Hogwarts is love. And it's that love that lit our way during our stay here.

"Keep that love with you always, and you'll always have the light. That light will always be your home, and it will always give you something, or someone, to come back to."

Quietly, he felt Hermione's fingers entwining with his. She was staring at the sun setting behind the towers of Hogwarts, just like he'd been. Then he heard her chuckle. "It's going to be so strange having your

aunt and uncle around all the time," she sighed. They both knew full well that they'd only come to take advantage of the situation, but that didn't make it any less...disturbing.

Harry sighed, knowing that Hermione understood everything he felt, and that she was trying to cheer him up, because she felt it, too. "My life started when I came to Hogwarts," he told her, and her hold tightened on his hand. "Now I feel like that life is coming to an end."

"No, Harry," she said, turning him to face her. "It's only just beginning."

Looking at her, he knew she was right. And, hand in hand, they mounted the train, and took their seats, letting the movement of the train on its tracks lull them into sleep as it lead them toward the beginning of their new lives.

The end.

Author's ramblings: Even if it says "The End" there's still the epilogue, but I'm sorry. I just can't continue this as much as I'd like to (though I have a sort of sequel planned). I know that this was awful and that I should probably just delete this chapter, but, for some reason, I can't. I will if you guys really beg me to. Anyway, thank you to all the people who reviewed and suggested things for this fic in general. I love you all. I hope you still love me even after this horrible chapter. Review and tell me what you think as always (meaning bring on the flames).

Thanks

Pearl

Disclaimer: I own a bunch of things and people in this chapter, and a bunch of others are JKR's. I'm sure you can figure out which are which.

Okay, I think the world is coming to an end. Seriously! Because my father reading Harry Potter is surely a sign of doom! We've (my family and I) have been trying to get him to read it for years, and now, suddenly he has. And what's even worse is that he read book 5 before I did (which rocks, by the way)! And another thing! I got a nomination for the Harry Potter Fanfiction Award of ! If you want to vote for me or anybody else, go to [.com/TheHarryPotterFanfiction-netFanFictionAwards](http://www.theharrypotterfanfiction.net/FanFictionAwards), sign up as a member, and post a message with all your nominations for the different categories. You have until August 23rd to vote.

By the way, did anyone notice the double meaning of the title of my fic? The 'Knowledge of a Mother' meant both Harry's growth through Lily's diary, and the knowledge in her visions that, in the end, saved him. Just a little note. Oh, and if you all remember, Marianne was Lily's middle name. Oh, and Chapter 18 is staying (after all those death threats I'd not like to see what happened if I deleted this), and I'm very proud of my epilogue.

To the reviewers: MandaB: when I start writing something else, I'll send you a copy so you can beta for me. And the sequel that I have in mind is only a six part thing that is only loosely connected to this, so many might be disappointed by it, but I feel the need to write it. DiezeL: I will definitely check out that story (after all the nominations it got I might as well be crazy not to), and you're right. I'm very definitely a H/HR shipper! Princess of Darkness12: Don't worry, I understood your review, and if I have to be totally honest, I didn't want this story to end (hence the delay in posting this. It's like closing a chapter of my life...don't ask). Herms the germ: don't worry, you didn't spoil me that much (most of the things you told me my sister had already explained in detail), but I'm glad I finally read the book. Mione Lover: that's not what I had in mind for the sequel, but now that I wrote this epilogue, the idea's beginning to interest me ^_^. Pyrope: Well, you might have severely damaged my hearing, but at least I got the point. Chapter 18 is there to stay. Thank you. DaphneS: I admit I didn't take your comment well, and that's because, unless it's a flame, if I have

to take that kind of criticism, I want it to be constructive. Now that you explained why that chapter was disappointing for you, I can honestly say, I agree. It's not one of my best and it could do with some heavy revising. I apologize, and I'll try to do better. Heather: The reason why the Dursleys are suddenly nice to Harry is that there are many Muggles who worship him just as much as Wizards, and, by staying close to him, they can take full advantage of the situation. I hope that was clear. Trowa no Miko: I was very surprised when, reading book 5, I've found so many congruities, but I think that's just because so many things had been hinted at in the previous books, and I'm usually pretty good at predicting outcomes and reading between the lines (my sister refuses to go to the Cinema with me because she says I spoil endings for her).

Harry Potter and the Knowledge of a Mother

Epilogue: The Snitch Capsule

It had been since the years of Harry Potter and his gang that Professor McGonagall hadn't lead such a brilliant...and...colorful graduating class to the Gryffindor Forever Remember Garden, and honestly, she was feeling a little nostalgic.

This gathering seemed to be the result of a clash collision between all the most memorable groups that had ever been under her teachings. She would both bless and curse this class's leaving. Life would be just a bit boring after their leaving.

As she walked briskly around the side of the lake, and then veered to the right, she stole a glance to the young woman beside her, the Hogwarts Head Girl. Looking at Marianne Potter-with her long, dark, luscious yet slightly bushy brown curls, her fair complexion, her slightly freckled, lovely, intelligent face-was just like watching a seventeen year old Hermione Granger, full of excitement and thirst for knowledge. Had it not been for her vivid, iridescent green eyes and her position as Gryffindor Seeker, she was every bit her mother's daughter.

Marianne felt her excitement rising within her at every step they took. She had a feeling that, whatever it was that McGonagall was going to

show them, it was bound to be something wonderful. The walk was long, but she didn't mind, even if her fellow Gryffindors-with the exception, of course, of the Potter Brigade (as they had been dubbed)-didn't seem to share her enthusiasm. Finally, after a long siding of the lake, their Head of House walked away from the mass of water, heading for a clearing filled with unusual, amazing stones. Some were as small as her fist, some others were the size of Hagrid, but they were all covered in a plush, sweet smelling, brownish moss. They were also very regularly shaped, which must have meant that they must have been magical. It even smelled of magic, and memories, adventures, heartache and life. And of dreams, she added in her mind as she noticed the veiled white fog that circled endlessly around each stone.

"Very well," she said, stopping her fast, stern strides on the outskirts of the misty rock garden, watching each student's reaction to the wonderful mossy fog of the Garden, "this is the Gryffindor Forever Remember Garden," she explained, and with that, made to take something out of her robes. "Does anybody know what this is?" And she opened her palms to show a very tiny creature that seemed covered in the same moss as the stones. It looked like it had the body of a toothless seal and paddle-like oval "limbs" that were so thin that they seemed transparent. It had large wings, several times larger than its body, that it used to lift itself in the air, circling above the teacher's head. The wings were just as thin as the limbs, yet they showed a rippling of very small muscles and vessels running through the thin veil of mystical brown transparent moss. Happily, the creature gave up a merry cry of "Dig!"

Before Marianne could hold her hand in the air to answer, one of her friends, and member of the Potter Brigade (and largely known prankster) that went by the name of Gwen Weasley, called gaily, "Ooh! It looks good!" McGonagall effort in suppressing a sigh was widely noticeable.

"Yeah, can we eat it?" Piped Gwen's identical twin, Sonya. McGonagall didn't manage to suppress a groan as the creature fluttering behind her shoulders gave a terrified "Dig!" Marianne hid her snigger behind her hand. Even if Gwen and Sonya's father, Ron Weasley, wasn't exactly a model student, everyone in the Weasley

clan had expected this set of twins to be a little more controlled than the previous one (known as the Twin Terrors till the day), especially because of their mother Krista, but apparently the whole family seemed to be cursed with one pair of identical redheads with a talent for troublemaking in each generation.

"No, Miss Weasley, you may not," McGonagall told her. "Now," she repeated, "does anybody know what this is?"

Marianne's hand shot up immediately.

"Yes, Miss Potter?"

"It's a Diggorinta," Marianne replied, and continued by giving a description of the animal very much like the one her mother had given several years prior. "It's a creature that associates a person, or group of people's, character, and finds the object that would be most suitable, or most needed, and brings it to light by digging."

"Very good, Miss Potter, ten points for Gryffindor," McGonagall exclaimed as she watched Caleb Malfoy give his best friend an encouraging pat on the shoulder, to which the girl blushed. The Head to the Gryffindor House would have never believed that she would one day have to host a Malfoy in her tower, but this one, despite the fact that he was the living portrait of his Slytherin father, was every ounce his Gryffindor mother. He and the Potter girl were her pride in this course. Proud, brilliant Gryffindors, even though they had that nonchalant rule-breaking streak that seemed to seep in both their lines. Their more than platonic friendship had become very amusing over the past couple of years, it was a bit like both their parents' courtships, albeit the previous generation had been far less blatant about it. "Now," she called their attention to the point, "the Diggorinta, though small, is rather powerful, and it's never wrong. Today, we will find the stone that most suits you young Gryffindors."

Many people were confused. They never felt the need to have a stone before.

"As a matter of fact, the Forever Remember Garden, this ground, is where we keep the history of every class that has Graduated

Hogwarts till this day. The day before your graduation, you will leave your mark here as well, but, until then, you will have a previous class's actions to observe," and she gave a nod to the Diggorinta, who replied to her with a very happy, "Dig!" the fear of the Damsels of Doom dissipating before its task.

The animal looked confused before each of the students it passed, probably because each was differently suited from the one before. Sometimes it almost seemed to reach a decision, but, facing the next student, it would change its mind. Maybe because afraid of what Sonya and Gwen might have been planning, the Diggorinta left the two of them and the other two members of the Potter Brigade as the last.

Strangely, however, before them it brightened considerably, as though an epiphany had just claimed it. It hadn't even looked at them singularly, almost as if what would suit them best had been written in blinking neon lights across their forehead, which, of course, left the four slightly perplexed. Gwen and Sonya were looking at the Diggorinta in a very threatening manner, their hands in their robe pockets, ready to pull out some new instrument of "torture" to use in case they felt it necessary. The animal, however, seemed very sure to have reached the perfect verdict.

With more merry cries of "Dig!" it reached a boulder near the center of the clearing, and sat atop it. It was by far the strangest stone any of them had ever seen. First of all, it was perfectly spherical, and it was covered in moss filled carvings. Marianne squinted at them, adjusting her thin, frames glasses on the bridge of her nose and gasped.

"Caleb," she called to him, meeting his piercing gray us, "look!" He turned to the boulder with confused, furrowed eyebrows. "Oh, honestly! You're the Captain of the Quidditch team, for Merlin's beard! You should recognize a Snitch when you see one!"

He gasped at this, and looked more closely at the carvings. She was right, they looked like the wings of the Golden Snitch, that, when closed, hugged the sphere in an intricately entwined manner. He gave her a sheepish grin. "Well, you're the one who's familiar with Snitches, you're the Seeker. I don't see much of them from my

position at the goal posts. If it was shaped like a hoop I would have recognized it right away," he called in his defense. She rolled her eyes at him with a small smile playing at her lips, and turned her attention back to the Diggorinta.

At the moment, the mossy skin of the Diggorinta in contact with the bolder seemed to blend with the moss of the stone, making them seem like one, strange looking creature made of pewter and moss. "Dig!" It cried enthusiastically, and, with a powerful flap of its wings, lifted itself and the stone to which it was attached in the air, lifting a good three meters in the air, leaving it to hover there, and detached itself from it.

Flying below it, the Diggorinta used its wings to draw a line following the outside of the indentation that the bolder had left on the wet ground, which seemed to shimmer from within. The animal raised itself back up so that it was hovering between the soft ground it had marked, and the bolder above its head, and, suddenly, without warning, it began to flap its paddle-like limbs frantically, like a dog digging to hide his bone in the yard. With each of those flaps the ground seemed to split, trembling under the students' feet, as though something was trying to push up from beneath. And it was!

The earth split like the sea before Moses, lifting up like lava from a volcano, and, suddenly, a shiny, glimmering, blinding sphere that seemed to be made of pure light erupted out of the dirt, perfectly clean, as though the muddy ground hadn't touched it at all, turning slowly on itself mere centimeters from their feet, as though trying to give them all a perfect view of its blinding beauty.

"Blimey!" Gwen exclaimed. "That's the biggest Snitch I've ever seen!" Sonya simply nodded in awe.

"Humph," McGonagall mused aloud. "Must be a family thing." Caleb gave Marianne a confused glance, which she returned, until the sphere stopped before her.

"Oh, look!" she called, pointing flabbergasted at a lock of sorts, that stared at her right at eye level. Standing there, on the lock, giving her significant looks were carved in gold a weasel, a big fox-wolf with four

marked tail, and a man-sized hawk with a squiggle carved over its right eye, all standing before a huge bolt of lightning, three books at their feet.

They four of them knew what that meant, having heard the tale told endlessly since the day they'd been born. They knew that if the carvings had been painted, the weasel would have had shiny red fur, the blonde fox-wolf's eyes would have been a shining topaz color fading to white in the pupil, and the hawk's feathers and beak a metallic black, its iridescent eyes shining green in the dark, and the three books at their feet were Lily Evans diary, her vision's journal, and Vatis Divinus' last book of prophesies.

"Blimey!" The twins called simultaneously. Caleb and Marianne could only nod.

"Well, that explains the giant Snitch," muttered Sonya.

"What do you mean?" Asked Marietta, a girl that shared the twins' dorm room.

"It's in honor of the youngest Quidditch player of the last century," Sonya said.

"The savior of the Wizarding World twice over," Gwen piped up.

"The Boy Who Lived," they bragged pompously, since it was a widely known fact that their Godfather was, "Harry Potter."

An awed silence fell over the Garden.

Marianne was stunned into silence. Of course, she'd been expecting it, but it seemed to put everything in far too new a light to be taken in so quickly. Obviously, her parents deeds were always told everywhere and everyday. There was never a time in which she could go down to Hogsmeade in which people didn't stop her to tell her some amazing tale of her parents' doings. But that was exactly what bothered her. She'd never really been able to hear the tales from her parents mouths, because, before they could tell her of the first tasks they lived through, new ones appeared to distract her. After

all, the two most important members of the Auror Bureau were constantly in danger.

Not that they didn't love to reminisce on their Hogwarts days, but it always felt as though in their retelling there were gigantic gaping voids, probably because they didn't want to tell her of all the rules had been broken, task that, apparently, Filch the caretaker and Snape the Potions master both thrived on. Even so, the stories weren't complete. And her parents school lives had always fascinated her. It was here that they had become heroes. It was here that everything had started. And maybe it would be here that she would find out exactly what had happened to make it so.

She felt Caleb take her hand. She knew that her father and his had been mortal enemies for the first several years of school. What had happened to make them the friends that they were today? Caleb seemed even more anxious to know, perhaps because, if Harry and Draco had never ended their animosity toward each other, she and he would have never been allowed to befriend each other, to love each other. They might have even been taught to hate each other.

So much had happened in the seven years Harry Potter had been at Hogwarts, there must have been something inside the giant Snitch that would tell them of it. Knowing her mother's cleverness, her father's deeds, and their best friend's Ron inventive, there was bound to be more than yearbooks and moving pictures!

She knew very that Lily's diary, which was now in her home, always next to her parents' nightstand, must have come out of a time capsule such as this.

"Hey, Rianne," Sonya snapped her out of her thoughts. "Why is it that your parents got such cool Animagus forms, while our dad turns into a bloody red WEASEL?!" She asked, half angry, pointing at the lock on the mega Snitch.

"Wasn't it, obvious?" Caleb asked rhetorically. Like his father Draco, Caleb enjoyed making fun of the twins' father. His Animagus form, which was now registered, one of their favorite topics to pick on.

"Finish the sentence, Malfoy," Gwen threatened, "and I'll enjoy bouncing a white ferret in the air, like Mad-Eye taught me last Christmas."

Caleb gave her a cheeky grin, but turned to McGonagall, who'd stepped over to the golden floating sphere, pointed her wand at the lock and called out "Alohomora!" Nothing happened. But McGonagall seemed spurned by this. "Ah, this time, I know what to do," she exclaimed, sounding slightly mad. Pointing her wand at the lock again, she called out "I solemnly swear I'm up to no good!" She sounded rather pleased at saying this.

The class burst into laughter.

And nothing happened.

McGonagall frowned, scratching her chin, trying to remember something else. Again, she pointed her wand at her lock. "Mischief is done!" Nothing happened, and the students were in hysterics.

"Think she's been teaching one too many years," Gwen was heard telling Sonya.

Desperate, she began to call unlocking spells endlessly, interrupted only by the off topic word that she thought might work, "Marauders! Dumbledore! Potter! Visions!" And on and on she went, until she huffed and glared openly at the Snitch as though it was her last resort.

"Potter and his wife must have put hundreds of defensive charms on that thing," they could hear somebody whisper.

"It's going to take us days to get this thing open, if not more!"

"Do you think there's anything dangerous in there?"

"Of course there is!"

Thoughts like these were spreading like a wildfire.

Staring at the lock in front of her eyes, the bolt of lightning behind the Animagi brought a memory to surface, and she felt herself smiling. She had no idea, when her mother had taught her the spell over the summer, that it would help her so quickly "out of tightly locked situations", as she'd said. How her mother had known, she would never find out, but she'd probably thought it obvious. "Professor?" She called with her hand in the air.

Surprised, McGonagall snapped her eyes away from the mad sphere to look at her student.

"Yes, Miss Potter?"

"May I try?" Again, a deep furrow appeared between the teacher's eyebrows, this reminded her far too much of a scene that had taken place in that very same garden with another Potter some twenty years later. Not knowing what else to try, she nodded. Pulling her wand out of her robes, she raised it over her head. There weren't many clouds, and they were a bit thin, but they would serve her purpose well enough. Concentrating, she invoked, "DISCERSO NUBIS!" And guided a decent sized lightning bolt down with her wand to stop on the engraved lock before her eyes.

Many girls screamed, scared by the sudden streak of light and its following rumble.

The lock fizzled and gave sparks as it absorbed the thin pillar of light.

After that it went quiet, and Marianne frowned, thinking that she must have done something wrong. Maybe her Discerpo Nubis wasn't strong enough. And then it happened.

It began to shake, spinning on itself, orbiting on itself, the rumble of the thunder resounding in the clearing, and the faster it spun, the louder the rumbling became. Threads of electricity began to run through the surface of the sphere, growing in number as the Snitch gained momentum, crackling louder as it went along.

And then it stopped, the seal facing Marianne. What had looked like only the carvings of the Snitch's wings, spread out to reveal true,

golden wings, as thin as a spiders web, which began to flutter so fast that they were nearly invisible, only the glittering glow of the gold telling that there was something at all moving before them.

And it began to move closer to them, out of the shadow of the boulder. They backed away from it, giving it all the room it wanted, all too stunned to utter a single word.

And, just as the sphere spinning and the wings fluttering became strong enough to make the Diggorinta chance a crash landing, just as the static became strong enough to get everyone's hair up in the air, just as the rumbling and crackling became deafening, then everything stopped.

Suddenly.

It stopped.

Everything.

No more spinning, or threads of electricity, or rumbling, or fluttering wings, which returned to their closed position, resembling simple carvings again. The wind died down right away and the only sound heard was the small crack of the sparks coming from the lock and from Marianne's wand.

Looking between the tip of her wand and the lock, Marianne came to a conclusion, and, wordlessly, she walked back up to the sphere, now blinding in full sunlight, and raised her wand, placing its tip against the tip of the lightning carved into the lock. The sparks melted into a single thread of electricity, which disappeared slowly, and, with a resounding click, the lock was slowly pushed back into the sphere, and, where the thin wings were outlined as carvings, the sphere began to open. Slowly, in front of their eyes the thin line became a crack, and then, before they even knew it, the top part of the sphere had been thrown back, so that two perfect halves of the whole, filled with Merlin knows what, were openly displayed.

"Wow," Caleb whispered under his breath, placing a hand around Marianne in pride.

But before any of them could step near, small golden spheres with fluttering flimsy wings began to zoom around them. More Snitches. They were flying in trained patterns, dancing before them in intricate ways, and Marianne was awed at the sheer amount of time and effort and charms her mother must have put into all this.

After circling them all, the Snitches went back to flutter over the opened sphere dancing again, and something else was lifted in the air. They looked like wooden fragments of a stick of wood, with several snapped twigs. "Rianne," she heard Caleb, "I think that's your dad's Nimbus 2000," he told her, referring to the father's first broom, which had been destroyed by the Whomping Willow in his third year of schooling. She nodded numbly.

The Snitches were flying so quickly that they were nothing but golden colored streaks zooming around each other, and then, as though it were a vision, among the streaking whizzes she could see a translucent image of her father, at age thirteen, on a broom in the middle of a horrible storm, players on brooms around him wearing Gryffindor and Hufflepuff colors.

The longer she stared, the clearer the image became, and as she watched her father racing with a good looking, much larger boy, she heard the muffled screams of an imaginary audience, Harry looked down, and she could practically see his happiness being drained as he lost consciousness, plummeting to the ground, the Nimbus 2000 losing height rapidly. And, while her father lay on the ground knocked out, the rain poring over him restlessly, the broom was swept away by a strong gust of wind, being thrashed directly at the Whomping Willow, being reduced to the shreds that were now going back into the sphere, replaced by a...doll of a dragon?

Around that dragon, appeared the image of Harry Potter summoning his Firebolt, whizzing around a mean looking dragon, performing amazing stunts to avoid serious injury, and finally getting past it to grab a golden egg, which, like pieces of broom before it, went back into the sphere to be replaced with the same golden egg that they'd just watched him grab.

And that showed Harry opening the aforementioned egg for the first time, a muted piercing Banshee like scream filling the air, then the image switched to one of Harry in what Marianne recognized as the Prefects bathroom, his head under the water along with the egg, which was singing a song about saving precious things.

And then the egg was replaced by a transparent four pointed star filled with something strongly resembling nail-polish, one of the tips deformed as though it had lived through a strong impact with something even more solid than its metallic plastic. And the image around it was of a battle scene, sloshed by heavy rain and lightning bolts, and in the midst of it a cloaked man with a white, almost scaly face, a flat nose, skeletal fingers, and glowing red eyes; his hands clenched under a girl's chin, trapping her in his hold. Her mother. And looking horrified before them were her father, along with Cicciobello. Harry erected a barrier of light around them as the cloaked figure insulted the young woman he held fast. In a moment of distraction the doll threw itself at the man in the same instant in which Hermione had pulled the star out of her robes, and threw it with all the strength in her body against her capturer's chest, embedding it there, and then, simultaneously, Harry and Hermione called out "Discerso Nubis" making two lightning bolts melt together, hitting their enemy with far too much force. The man fell.

And so did the Holostar.

The Snitches slowed down until they all stopped and returned to the open sphere, and silence ensued.

Nobody dared to move.

Marianne couldn't hear anything but her own heart thundering in its cage, feel nothing but the light sheen of sweat that had covered her brow, taste nothing but her parched mouth.

Numbly, she realized that Caleb had just laced his fingers through hers, and she drew strength and warmth from his hand.

"Rianne," called a wide eyed Gwen who was staring at the immobilized Snitches inside the sphere, "your mum's a genius."

Sonya next to her, nodded, looking much like her sister did. And, for several seconds, nobody moved, or even attempted to breath.

Caleb gave Marianne's hand an encouraging squeeze and, trembling, she took a step toward the sphere and stood directly between the two halves of it. In one of it stood the objects that had just animated the air above, standing apart from the rest of the things in that half, which was mostly made of books. Caleb stepped next to her, and bent down to pick one up. Opening to the first page, he found many newspaper articles cut out and pasted there. The whole book was of newspaper articles. With a grin he turned to Marianne. "These are all about your parents."

She nodded numbly.

The insides of both halves of the spheres were completely covered in moving pictures, many of which were of Harry Potter, Hermione Granger, and Ronald Weasley.

The other half was taken up completely by more of those translucent stars. Curious she picked one up. It was lighter than what she would have expected, but harder as well, and, in the point in which all the points met there was an indentation that seemed to be made for the tip of a wand. Holding the star in her left hand, she lifted her right to place the tip of her wand in the center of the indentation.

Instantly, another image, more like a hologram, took place before her eyes. It must have been from Ron's point of view, and it showed her parents at age seventeen in a Muggle kitchen (far too clean for sanity), spinning around, light coming out of their bodies and flooding everyone's field of vision.

The final defeat of Voldemort. She'd heard Ron tell the tale endlessly, though her parents hardly ever spoke of it. They said it was best to live for the present, not for the past, and, to them, Voldemort had been centuries ago.

"Oh, this must have been the first type of Holostars!" Exclaimed Gwen as she picked one up.

"Yeah!" Said Sonya. "Hermione practically invented them all on her own. She's the real reason why Uncle Fred and Uncle George are so rich now!"

Within minutes the whole class had been taken over by an excited chatter as they looked into the memories of Gryffindors who were before them, and, without knowing it, Marianne let their excitement influence her.

They spent the biggest part of the morning looking the Holostars, Caleb the only one with a real interest for the thick books that had been on the other side of the sphere, though several times he'd managed to catch everyone's attention with something amazing that the tomes that he'd been scrutinizing.

Somewhere around lunch time, Marianne heard him hiss her name urgently. "Rianne!"

Curious she sat next to him on the bolder he was occupying, and took the heavy, well kept, black, leather bound book he was offering. She raised her eyebrows in question. "Just open it," he told her with concealed excitement.

She did so, and stared flabbergasted at the words written there. In a penmanship that she recognized as her mother's, were etched black on white before her eyes.

The Hogwarts Chronicles of Harry Potter

By Hermione Lynn Granger

She felt her fingers tremble as she held the book. Was this what she thought it was?

It had to be! And with that she turned to the next page.

Before you go on and read this, whoever you are, I have one request.

I don't know if I'll be alive when this capsule is dug up out of the Forever Remember Garden. And I know that I could publish this

myself this very moment, only a short time after the downfall of Voldemort, but I don't think the world is ready for it yet. I know that when the Diggorinta will pull out this the Garden, it will be because it knows that it's time.

So this is my request.

Please, once you've finished reading this yourself, if I still live, contact me and bring it back to me. If not, well, then I ask you to take this to a publishing house, so that the Wizarding world, and Muggle if some of them decide to put this on their market, will know the truth about who saved them, and how he did it.

She knew it was foolish, but she couldn't keep the tears from trailing hotly from her eyes.

Again, she felt Caleb take her hand, and she knew. She knew he understood.

This was her chance to know her parents the way she'd wanted to, to find out what happened.

It was her chance to feel proud of the fact that she was their daughter.

The Diggorinta gave another happy "Dig!" and made for Hagrid's hut.

The end.

Author's ramblings: That's it folks. The end. I hope you guys enjoyed the time capsule as much as I did. Oh, and I love Caleb! I don't know why, but I adore him, and I'm fond of the new Weasley twins, too (maybe they remind me of someone, but I can't think of who ^____^). By the way, for all of you who wanted me to email them when new chapter came out, I'm sorry. And to those that want me to send them email notifications of when my others stories will come out, send me an email with your address and I'll do that (but remember to leave a review as well), don't ask in the reviews because I have too many to sort through to check. And remember to go vote!

Thank you

Pearl